National Library of Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# 'AUTHENTIC' FEMININITY AND WORKING WOMEN: MARGARET OLIPHANT'S SALEM CHAPEL, MISS MARJORIBANKS, AND PHOEBE, JUNIOR

BY

©

RHONDA BATCHELOR

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1993

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

*Your file Votre référence*

*Our file Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-88338-3

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Rhonda Batchelor

TITLE OF THESIS: 'Authentic' Femininity and Working Women: Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*, *Miss Marjoribanks*, and *Phoebe, Junior*

DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Rhonda Batchelor

Box 732
Redwater, Alberta
TOA-2WO

Date: October 7, 1993

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled 'AUTHENTIC' FEMININITY AND WORKING WOMEN: MARGARET OLIPHANT'S SALEM CHAPEL, MISS MARJORIBANKS, AND PHOEBE, JUNIOR submitted by RHONDA BATCHELOR in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

S Hamilton

Susan Hamilton

Gary Kelly

Gary Kelly

Susan Jackel

Susan Jackel

Date: October 5, 1993

# M.A. THESIS ABSTRACT

Central issues in the Victorian debate on 'the woman question' were the conceptualizations of femininity and the specification of woman's 'place.' This debate manifested itself in many forms of cultural discourse, including the serialized novel. Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), novelist, literary critic, social commentator, historical writer, and conservative feminist, participated in the cultural production of 'woman' in her fiction series _The Chronicles of Carlingford_. Through an analysis of her constructions of women and their 'natural' work in three novels of that series--_Salem Chapel_, _Miss Marjoribanks_, and _Phoebe, Junior_--I show how Oliphant operates within traditional, gendered notions of 'authentic' identity to appropriate the workplace and its 'public' concerns as 'naturally' feminine expressions of who women have putatively always been.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction and Biography . . . . . . . . . . .1

Chapter Two: Models of Womanhood . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 27

Chapter Three: Domestic Labour and Social Authority . . . 58

Chapter Four: Woman's Work and Economic Value . . . . . . 84

Chapter Five: Models of Manhood and the Object of Work. .116

Chapter Six: Conclusion . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .162

Works Cited . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .172

# Chapter One
# Introduction and Biography

Few women represent the issues that surrounded 'the woman question' as literally and literarily as Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant did. Her birth, in 1828, almost exactly coincided with that of the Victorian period itself. By the end of her life, she had been a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, and a widow. She had worked to support her family from the beginning of her long career as a novelist, literary critic, social commentator, and historical writer. She had, in other words, a tremendous personal and professional stake in her culture's debate about the changing definitions and roles for woman in Victorian society. As Judith Newton observes about all "[w]omen of letters," Oliphant's writing allowed her to "articulate [her] own versions of the laws of historical development, offer [her] own values as 'value' and the 'quality of life itself,' and in this way struggle for cultural space and social authority" (2). That is, Oliphant endeavoured throughout her long career to show that the working woman is necessarily moral and 'authentically' feminine because she fulfills the traditional requirements for womanhood with her self-sacrifice and service to others. Implicit in her constructions of working womanhood is the idea that the concept of work itself is an essentially feminine construct (and her definitions of work range, in her writing, from domestic to public labour). She does not contest the "specific meanings" of traditional womanhood, but "challenge[s] the natural status of seemingly dichotomous [terms]" that were fundamental to her society's understanding of what it meant to be a moral woman and "expose[s] their interdependence and their internal instability" (Scott 7). Before looking at the way Oliphant negotiates this issue of feminine identity in such representative pieces of her work as Salem Chapel, Miss Marjoribanks, and Phoebe Jr. (which are part of her best known series, The Chronicles of Carlingford), I will show how Oliphant herself lived the issues she wrote so much about.

When Oliphant was born on April 4, 1828 in Wallyford, Midlothian, Scotland, her parents, Francis and Margaret Wilson, were about forty years old. Frank, her oldest brother, was twelve and Willie, the second oldest, was nine. All the activity (or inactivity) of her early domestic life revolved around her withdrawn and anti-social father, who was a clerk, and around the needs of his sons. One of Oliphant's clearest memories of her childhood is of her mother, hovering around the kitchen table at which Frank sat, catering blissfully to his every need (Autobiography and Letters of Mrs. Margaret Oliphant 9). In spite of the attention that Margaret Wilson devoted to her sons, she also doted on Oliphant, who the mother felt "had brought back life" to a heart that had suffered the loss of three children between Willie's birth and her daughter's (A & L 11).

Both parents were literate, but it was Oliphant's mother who passed on an abiding love for the printed word. At least two of the ends served by Wilson's early introduction of literature to her children were their informal education and the quiet domestic environment that her husband demanded. Both before and after Oliphant learned to read on her own (at six), she was regularly entertained by her mother with "Bible stories, bits of family history, ballads, tales of the saintly Queen Margaret who had brought the arts of civilisation to Scotland, Shakespeare, Pope, Wordsworth, Burns, and Scott" (Williams 4). Literacy enabled Oliphant to become a regular visitor to the circulating library in Glasgow, where the family had moved in 1834 to accommodate her father's new job as a clerk at the Royal Bank. The only restrictions placed upon Oliphant's reading were those of the librarian and they stopped short of Bulwer Lytton's "immoral novel" Ernest Maltravers which Oliphant tried to borrow at nine years old (Williams 4).

Although no mention is made in A & L of Oliphant's formal education, it is probable that she attended the parish school that was available to most children of the lower and lower-middle classes of Scotland at that time (Williams 4). She also benefitted intellectually from the "political and Radical" conversations that passed between her mother and her brother Frank (A & L 10). Another important influence in the shaping of Oliphant's mind and character was her family's membership in the Free Church of Scotland, a radical sect of the state religion, Presbyterianism. The Free Church had separated from the main body in order to put into practice its belief that spiritual leadership should be determined by those individuals who were to be led, rather than by those religious authorities who had an interest in consolidating their institutionalized control over local worship and private moral practice.

This very political religious activism occurred in 1843 while the family lived in Liverpool. They had moved to England in 1838 so that Francis Wilson could take up yet another clerical position, this time with the export department of the Customs House. Liverpool, in these years, embodied the stereotypical urban nightmare of working class poverty and physical hardship that underwrote the industrial dream of middle class wealth and genteel living. Oliphant speaks of "the great distress" of fellow rural immigrants and tells how she came to understand the potential inherent in individual or private charity for general social improvement (A & L 14-17). She was active in her family's efforts to redress the domestic and social injustices that were everywhere around them. These social actions were executed at as personal a level as the sewing of a dress for a charwoman whose old (and likely only) one had been torn from her back by her husband's mistress (Williams 6) and at as public a level as the collection of signatures for an anti-Corn Law petition. Oliphant's involvement in this protest is important because it indicates her ideological alliance with the middle-class women whose "activities apparently cross[ed] from private to public life . . . to support the claims of their class to participate in the making of national policies" (Rendall, Introduction 9). In spite of the apparent dissimilarity of these projects, Oliphant's A & L links the second, more political type of social intervention with the first as responses to public suffering for the relief of which the charitably-motivated domestic realm was uniquely suited:

> There was a great deal of talk in the papers, which were full of [Anti-Corn Law] agitation, about a petition from women to Parliament upon that subject, with instructions to get sheets ruled for signatures, and an appeal to ladies to help in procuring them. It was just after or about the time of our great charity, and I was in the way of going thus from house to house [collecting orders for needed provisions and coal which Willie would then assemble and deliver]. Accordingly I got a number of these sheets, or probably Frank got them for me, and set to work. (17)

These "momentous" events were the girl's first real interactions with the world (A & L 14). She remembers them as "breaks . . . in [her] most singularly secluded" early life and as the only interruptions of her family's usual "pleasures," which typically consisted of

> books of all and every kind, newspapers and magazines, . . . form[ing] the staple of our conversation, as well as our amusement. In the time of my depression and sadness [over a vaguely recounted near-marriage to "a good, simple, pious, domestic, kind-hearted fellow, fair-haired, not good-looking, not ideal at all"] my mother had a bad illness, and I was her nurse, or at least attendant. I had no liking for needlework, a taste which I developed afterwards, so I took to writing. (*A & L* 16)

As with the other literature, Oliphant's writing became a source of entertainment for the family, with evening readings and critiques of her daily production forming a prominent part of each after-supper assembly. Four years later in 1849, this writing also became a source of income. Henry Colburn, who was "then one of the chief publishers of novels," printed *Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland*, a history that Oliphant "got into . . . somehow" during her writing exercises, on "the half-profit system" (*A & L* 18). Thus began Oliphant's remarkable professional life that was to span forty-eight years, produce nearly one hundred novels and three hundred periodical pieces (of both fiction and non-fiction), and elevate her to the social eminence of being "the favorite novelist" of Queen Victoria (Colby xiii).

This first story, which went to three editions in the initial year of its publication, set the tone and themes that informed the author's fiction and much of her non-fiction throughout her life. It is a 'realistic' portrayal of quotidian existence rendered without "exaggeration in the sayings and doings of the character" (Athenaeum 24 November, 1849). The novel's themes and structure reflect the domestic, social, political, and religious context in which Oliphant's intellect had taken shape: a central feminine figure of independent thought and self-determined moral philosophy (developed, at least in this early work, from the heroine's contemplation of and commitment to fairly orthodox religious principles) observes and considers the domestic relations between men and women, the subordinate place of women within a patriarchal social and economic system, and the moral need for each individual to question the right of institutionalized authority (whether religious, social, or political) to wholly determine private existence. The work also displays Oliphant's early cognizance of the way in which Victorian women, through their novels, "entered the critical sphere [of] social and ethical (rather than [solely] literary) discourse" (Ferris 19). Passages' plot eventually confirms the soundness of the heroine's original principles. On the way to that determination, however, the testing suggests that the woman who adheres to these standards is as vulnerable to economic injustice and personal oppression at the hands of her curiously dependent social and domestic superiors--men--as those women who fall away from these principles. Although Oliphant is regarded by twentieth-century critics as "disparaging of the feminist movement" (Williams 25), this construction contains the unheard-of suggestion that putatively inalienable domestic labour was, in reality, eminently alienable (Poovey 14-15).

As is true of her later work, much of Oliphant's early plot reflects a Foucauldian notion of the determining peculiarities of place and history. That is, the heroine is who she is because of where and when she is. Her knowledge (about herself and her world) is "produced by [her] culture and societ[y] of human relationships . . . [and] is not absolute and true, but always relative" to its historical point of production (Scott 2). In this case, Maitland is a Scots matron who has internalized enough of her nation's Enlightenment history to realize, first, that she is sufficient in and of herself to create a moral and productive life; second (a deduction from the first principle), that worthwhile domestic life does not necessarily depend on a woman's intimate relationship with a male (and, in fact, the contemporary surplus of women insisted that it often could not); and, third, that, despite these 'truths', woman must still negotiate the moral dilemma represented by necessary feminine independence in a society that continued to value women only for their emotional and domestic support of a male striving for meaningful social identity. In Oliphant's books, as in her life, valued male significance usually referred to his employment or his ability to secure an income of some form. Oliphant includes a marriage or two in the 'happy ending' of Passages, but the heroine remains serenely single and 'fulfilled' by her selfless promotion of the well-being of those who depend upon her. It is not a radically feminist representation of woman by any stretch of the imagination, but it does deal sympathetically with an autonomous spinster who refuses to hand over her life and property to a male. Although Oliphant could have no way of knowing it, many of Passages' themes were to work themselves out in her own life.

Two years and five novels after Passages[1], Oliphant married her first cousin Frank Oliphant who she had met in 1850 when her family sent her to London to try to contain Willie's rapidly disintegrating life.

The Oliphants were married on May 4, 1852, the same day that Margaret received the galley proofs of her latest story, "Katie Stewart," from her new publisher, Blackwood's. Of the two relationships begun that day, the professional one was to last the longest and bring Oliphant the most stability. She discovered, within a year of her marriage to the young artist (Frank was a painter at heart but by trade a designer of Gothic-style stained-glass windows for which there was little demand and less recognition), that the economic maintenance of their slightly bohemian, but predominantly bourgeois, lifestyle was to fall to her. Frank simply was not a capable businessman and he was unable to manage profitably the artisan crew that worked for him in his small workshop studio. The serialized novel that Oliphant published in book form in 1854, The Quiet Heart, reflects many of the domestic upheavals she experienced at this time: a young heroine falls in love with a promising, but eventually inadequate, artist (he is a writer, in the fiction, instead of a painter or a glazier) who is constantly insolvent and at odds with the heroine's mother; the pending marriage is deemed unsuitable; and the protagonist remains unworthy until he reconciles with the mother and recognizes his dependence (for both happiness and survival, since his career is in tatters) on the domestic place maintained by the now financially-secure heroine (who has become a successful illustrator). As Vineta and Robert Colby remark in their deprecating account of Oliphant's work and life, the author insisted that she did not use her life in her fiction, but The Quiet Heart is "so personal that one wonders how she could have allowed her husband to read it" (24).

---

[1] Caleb Field, A Tale of the Puritans [1851]; Merkland, A Story of Scottish Life [1851]; and Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme of Mossgray [1852] are all attributed openly to Oliphant, while two others, John Drayton the Liverpool Engineer [1851] and The Melvilles [1852], were published in her brother Willie's name, probably because Willie drank heavily and needed both money and esteem to combat the mysterious "defeat in life [he had come by somehow] which [his sister] did not understand" [A & L 14]),

Although Oliphant looks back in A & L from the vantage point of 1888 to reveal other disappointed expectations, she also suggests that these experiences forced her to mature and made her see her position (as a bread-winner and a wife) in realistic terms:

> The glimpse of society I had during my married life in London was not of a very elevating kind; or perhaps I--with my shyness and complete unacquaintance with the ways of people who gave parties and paid incessant visits--was only unable to take any pleasure in it, or get beyond the outside petty view, and the same strange disappointment and disillusion with which the pictures and the stage had filled me, bringing down my ridiculous impossible ideal to the ground. . . . I had expected everything that was superlative,--beautiful conversation, all about books and the finest subjects, great people whose notice would be an honour, poets and painters, and all the sympathy of congenial minds, and the feast of reason and the flow of soul. . . . I found everything commonplace and poor, not at all what I expected. (33-34)

During this period she met such people as Dinah Mulock (who was later to become a popular novelist and to marry George Craik of Macmillan's publishing house, thus forming a useful connection to another source of income for Oliphant), Mary Howitt, Grace Greenwood (an American author whose real name, Sara Jane Clarke Lippincott, is perhaps more familiar now than her pen name), the Samuel Carter Halls, Stephen Fullom (a renowned literary and social critic), Frank Smedley (author of Frank Farleigh and Harry Coverdale's Courtship), George Lovell (playwright), and Rosa Bonheur. She also continued and deepened the friendship with photographer Geddie Macpherson that she had formed during her first trip to London to care for Willie.

If most of these people were a disappointment to Oliphant, her daughter Maggie was not. She was born in

1854, just a few months before her grandmother's death, which, in turn, preceded only by another few months the death of Oliphant's second child, Marjorie, in February of 1855. Oliphant's autobiography barely refers to her father throughout this period and he seems to have all but disappeared from her life after the death of Margaret Wilson. Although Oliphant was devastated by her mother's death, the effects paled beside those occasioned by her daughter's. Only the birth of her beloved son Cyril (who nicknamed himself Tiddy) in November of 1856 assuaged the sense of loss she felt, a feeling that had been increased by the death of another child (this one a day-old son) near the end of 1855.

Tiddy's birth marks the beginning of one of the few prolonged periods of contentment that Oliphant was ever to know. During this three-year interval, she published eight moderately successful novels and submitted twenty-six pieces for publication in Blackwood's. Although the subjects of her journalism continued to reflect Oliphant's early concerns over the changing nature of society, the place and role of woman within that evolving body, and the function of literature in the social process, twentieth-century accounts of her work see "[h]er distinctive concern [as] the nature and destiny of woman" (Helsinger 138). She wrote about "Religion in Common Life" (1856), "The Laws Concerning Women" (1856), "Modern Light Literature: Society" (1857), "The Condition of Women" (1858), and "The Byways of Literature" (1858). Her domestic life was also fairly tranquil throughout these years, despite the death of a six-week old son, Stephen Thomas, in 1858, from a "defective valve in the heart, which [Mary Howitt] said was somehow connected with too much mental work on the part of the mother" (A & L 36). Oliphant recalls this period as one of the best "among the happy moments which I can recollect,"

> one which is so curiously common and homely, with nothing in it, that it is strange even to record such a recollection, and yet it embodied more happiness to me than almost any real occasion as might be supposed for happiness. It was the moment after dinner when I used to run up-stairs to see that all was well in the nursery. . . . [M]y heart [was] full of joy and peace--for what? --for nothing--that there was no harm anywhere, the children well above stairs and their father below. I had few of the pleasures of society, no gaiety at all. . . . I can feel now [1891] the sensation of that sweet calm and ease and peace. (A & L 44-45)

This peace ended on October 20, 1859 with husband-Frank's death while the family was visiting Rome, a trip undertaken in hope that a change of climate would alleviate the symptoms of his tuberculosis. Oliphant buried her husband in Italy and then remained there to await the birth of her son, Francis (nicknamed Cecco). She had only seven weeks to wait (Cecco was born on December 12) and to consider the situation in which her husband had left her. Her remarkably candid account of this time reveals her resentment over Frank's irresponsibility in taking his inexperienced, pregnant wife and their two children away from the shores of home when he knew that, in all likelihood, his death was very near:

> Frank died quite conscious, kissing me when his lips were already cold, and quite, quite free from anxiety, though he left me with two helpless children and one unborn, and very little money, and no friends but the Macphersons [the photographers], who were as good to me as brother and sister; but had no power to help beyond that, if anything could have been beyond that. . . .
>
> When I thus began the world anew I had for all my fortune about L1000 of debt, a small insurance of, I think, L200 on Frank's life, our furniture laid up in a warehouse [back in England], and my own faculties, such as they were, to make our living and pay off our burdens by.
> (A & L 63-64)

Oliphant's dependence on her writing (and, thus, on her publishers' approval of her work) was complete. Despite the loss of her husband, her household gradually expanded to include, first, the two daughters (Fanny and Sarah) of her good friends Principal John and Jane Tulloch and, by 1870, the four children (Frank, Nellie, Madge, and Denny) of her eldest brother Frank, whose life had foundered, economically and spiritually, and who eventually depended on his sister's largess for his own existence until his death in 1875. In the meantime, however, Oliphant's own daughter, Maggie, died while the family was on a return trip to Rome in 1864 that Oliphant made in the company of Mrs. Tulloch, their five children, and Oliphant's redoubtable maid, Jane. The party of women and children had travelled to Italy as Oliphant now lived: in high style (which explains much of the author's continuous financial crisis) and high spirits, "with the sense of holiday, a little outburst of freedom, no man interfering, keeping [them] to rule or formality" (A & L 91). The trip home was made without Oliphant's beloved daughter, who they buried beside her father. With only a brief interlude for mourning, Oliphant's writing continued to be published at a phenomenal rate.

In the five years between her husband's and her daughter's deaths, Oliphant produced close to thirty-five periodical pieces on subjects as diverse as "Social Science" (1860), "Scotland and her Accusers" (1861), "Sensation Novels" (1862), and "The Life of Jesus" (1864), amongst others. She also wrote regular reviews of popular fiction (for which she is retrospectively regarded as "the foremost female reviewer of the period" [Helsinger 123]) and eight books (one of which was the unremunerative, but lovingly undertaken, Life of Edward Irving, Minister of the National Scotch Church, London [1862]). Three of the novels in this group of books eventually became Oliphant's tremendously popular series about a petit bourgeois Dissenting community called The Chronicles of Carlingford that Michael Wheeler says "offers a sarcastic but moderate view of the pettiness of mid-Victorian religious life in the dullest of towns . . . that has a rather awful ring of truth" (99): The Rector and the Doctor's Family (1863), Salem Chapel (1863), and The Perpetual Curate (1864). Owing to the success of her Carlingford work, Oliphant was able to demand and receive large sums both on speculation and for completion of her novels. At one point she was approached by the Graphic, a weekly paper, and offered L1300 for a serialized novel that she had not yet written. She accepted with alacrity and relief because her family had, once again, expanded suddenly.

In 1870 brother-Frank "came to [Oliphant] like a child glad to get home, not much disturbed about anything that could happen" and life had to go on (A & L 124). Frank brought his children with him and relinquished all responsibility for his and their well-being to Oliphant. Eight children, two adults (she was also financing her drunken brother Willie's life in Italy), and at least two servants were all completely supported by Oliphant's "trade." Fortunately, most of her work continued to be popular (especially the next novel in the Carlingford series, Miss Marjoribanks [1866]; an unrelated novel called A Son of the Soil [1866]; the non-fictional Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II [1869]; and The Story of Valentine and his Brother [1875]). But, still, she was hard pressed to meet the family's increased demands for money. Her periodical output during this time (1864-1875) was extraordinary and remained in high demand, despite the fact that Oliphant was often her own greatest competitor, with several books and articles being published simultaneously by rival houses. The subjects about which she wrote were extremely topical and Oliphant always argued forcibly and thoughtfully on even the most controversial subjects without taking refuge behind the complex intellectualism that so alienated readers. Her articles of this period were distributed to Blackwood's (ninety-one, including "The Great Unrepresented [Women]" [1866]), Cornhill Magazine (nine short fiction pieces), Macmillan's Magazine (four short stories), Edinburgh Review (three, including a response to "Mill on The Subjection of Women" [1869]), and St. Paul's Magazine (a serialized novel, "The Three Brothers," that ran over a year [June, 1869 to September, 1870]).

In a typically understated recollection of the burden she carried in these years, Oliphant says,

> Of course I had to face a prospect considerably changed by this great addition to my family. I had been obliged to work pretty hard before to meet all the too great expenses of the house. . . . I remember making a kind of pretense to myself that I had to think it over, to make a decision, to give up what hope I might have had of doing now my very best, and to set myself steadily to make as much money as I could for [the genteel education of] the three boys. I think that in some pages of my old book I have put this down with a little half-sincere attempt at a heroical attitude. I don't think, however, that there was any reality in it. I never did nor could, of course, hesitate for a moment as to what had to be done. It had to be done, and that was enough, and there is no doubt that it was much more congenial to me to drive on and keep everything going, with a certain scorn of the increased work . . . than it ever would have been to labour with an artist's fervour and concentration to produce a masterpiece. One can't be two things or serve two masters. Which was God and which was mammon in that individual case it would be hard to say.
> (A & L 125)

By the time her brother died in 1875, Oliphant had educated his son (Frank) and was preparing to send him off to a post in India. She had also installed her own two boys at Eton and had taken another young female relative, Annie (the editor of her autobiography), into her home to live with her. Oliphant wrote many articles that were rejected and unless she could produce what was wanted upon demand--or, perhaps, produce a want in her publishers to create a demand for her work--insolvency was, throughout her life, only a month or so away. She had come to see her ability to conquer all difficulties and live rather extravagantly despite a frustratingly precarious livelihood as almost unethical:

> It was always a struggle to get safely through every year and make my ends meet. Indeed I fear they never did quite meet; there was always a tugging together, which cost me a great deal of work and much anxiety. The wonder was that the much was never too much. . . . If I had not had unbroken health, and a spirit almost criminally elastic I could not have done it. I ought to have been worn out by work, and crushed by care, half a hundred times by all rules, but I never was so. . . . [I]t was in its way an immoral, or at least an un-moral, mode of life, dashing forward in the face of all obstacles and taking up all burdens with a kind of levity, as if my strength and resources could never fail. If they failed, I should have been left in the direst bankruptcy; and I had no right to reckon upon being delivered at the critical moment. . . . I persuaded myself then that I could not help it, that no better way was practicable, and indeed did live by faith, whether it was or was not exercised in a legitimate way. I might say now that another woman doing the same thing was tempting Providence. To tempt Providence or to trust God, which was it? (A & L 128-29)

At least one of the "obstacles" that Oliphant refers to in this passage is the education of her sons, Tiddy and Cecco. Although there is evidence that the boys were bright enough, indolence and ill-health prevented them from getting the scholarships for academic achievement that would have substantially lightened Oliphant's financial burden. From hints in Oliphant's autobiography, it seems that the brothers neither comprehended nor appreciated their mother's enormous labour on their behalf. Merryn Williams confirms in his Critical Biography of Oliphant that the boys took her generosity for granted and responded to any wishes of hers that curtailed their 'gentlemanly' pursuits with contempt, discourtesy, and increasingly petulant demands for more money and freedom (147-49, 171-72, 175).

The other obstacles to financial stability were brother-Frank's daughters. Like the boys, they needed to be educated. Madge, after training to become an engraver, married William Valentine, and Oliphant, in a letter to Craik of Macmillan's, expresses her resentment over "the foolishness of giving expensive training to young women" when their need for support is to be met (and their freedom to work to be circumscribed) by their attachment to a male (A & L 396). Nellie, thankfully, had gone to live with another aunt, Jessie Sime, but proved, as an adult, to be too eccentric for the governess posts for which she was qualified and which she tried to secure. Eventually, she moved to Toronto after aunt Jessie refused to share financial responsibility for her maintenance with Oliphant. In Canada, Nellie joined the household of her father's brother, Daniel Wilson (who was, by this time, president of the university in that city). Denny, the youngest of the family, trained as an artist and Oliphant hoped that she would eventually become self-supporting. Unfortunately, she never did achieve that independence. She remained attached to Oliphant until the author's death and then took over the raising of her sister's children (Madge died in 1897 of scarlet fever, only six weeks after Oliphant, leaving three children).

Throughout the remaining twelve years of Oliphant's life (1875-1897), her work was published at an unprecedented rate. Seventy-four books made it into print, including Phoebe Jr., A Last Chronicle of Carlingford (1876), A Beleaguered City (1880), The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (1882), Hester and The Ladies Lindores (1883), Two Stories of the Seen and Unseen (1885), Lady Car, The Sequel of a Life (1889), Kirsteen, A Story of a Scottish Family Seventy Years Ago (1890), The Railwayman and his Children (1891), A Child's History of Scotland (1895), The Ways of Life, Two Stories (1897). Five more were published posthumously (three of which are A Widow's Tale, and Other Stories [1898], Autobiography and Letters [1899], and Queen

Victoria, A Personal Sketch [1900]). As had been the case during her entire professional life, many of Oliphant's books had been serialized originally but the articles she wrote were commentaries on various subjects that appeared only once in one publication or another. In this final period, these uncollected submissions number one hundred fourteen. Of this group, two represent regular editorial observations of events (literary, social, and political) that Oliphant deemed worthy of note in Blackwood's: "The Old Saloon" ran from January, 1887 to December, 1892 and "The Looker-on" appeared from August, 1894 to October, 1896. The subjects of her non-fiction submissions were divided amongst critical biographies and literary and social critiques. In the first category of writing she produced analyses of the life and works of Michael Angelo, W. M. Thackeray (about whom Oliphant obtained much information from Annie Thackeray Ritchie, her longtime confidante), de Musset, Harriet Martineau, Daudet, Lucas Collins, Tennyson, Thomas and Jane Carlyle (to whom Oliphant had been a friend since 1858 when she was researching the life of Edward Irving), Victor Hugo, George Eliot, Lady Cloncurry (both she and her daughter, Emily Lawless, had long been friends of Oliphant's), and many, many others. In the second group are her papers about "The Grievances of Women" (1880), "Men and Women" (1895), and "The Anti-Marriage League" (1896). Many of the short stories from this time reflect Oliphant's awakened interest in the effects of social existence on authentic selfhood, which she posits in these works as a comprehensible 'truth' of moral being that is able to communicate itself across the barriers between spiritual and material existence: "The Open Door" and "A Little Pilgrim" (1882), "Old Lady Mary" (1884), "The Portrait" (1885), "The Land of Darkness" (1887), "The Library Window" (1896), and "The Land of Suspense" (1897).

The intense attention that Oliphant brought to bear in her fiction on the supernatural world seems to have had two motivations: first, stories of this type had become very popular and, second, many of her friends and nearly all of her family now resided in this ethereal realm. In 1879, Oliphant received word that her "dear boy Frank Wilson, [her] nephew whom [she] brought up . . . died in India . . . of typhoid fever" (A & L 283). Major John Blackwood, friend and publisher, also died that year. Three years later, in 1882, a neighbour of many years and an intimate of the household, Nellie Clifford, died in her sleep. Principal Tulloch, mentor and friend, died in 1886, and was followed by his wife (also a lifelong companion to Oliphant) a year later. Oliphant's oldest son, Tiddy (Cyril), succumbed to a mysterious respiratory ailment in 1890, as did Cecco to tuberculosis in 1894. Lady Cloncurry died the same year as Oliphant's youngest son. Two of Oliphant's oldest and closest friends, Emma FitzMaurice and Isabella Blackwood died within a month of each other in the winter of 1896.

Oliphant's own health had begun to fail as early as 1890, when rheumatism occasionally forced her to curtail her activity, but 1894 marks the beginning of her increasingly noticeable, final decline. At least part of this slow collapse was owing to the loss of purpose and identity she felt once all of her children had died. Her letters from this time speak of her grief and her bewilderment:

> When God called upon me to give up what was the half of my being [she refers here to Tiddy, interestingly, and not to her husband as one might suppose], I could speak a little and express the anguish that was in me; for then I had still my Cecco, his ever-ready arm to lean on, and a motive and object for every self-denial. But now I have lost all, everything on this earth that came from me and was wholly mine. . . . God only knows, who has not spared, what Cecco was to me--my child still, though a man, my dearest friend and closest companion. . . . [N]ature is very weak and humanity very short-sighted, and the distance that is between him and me and the silence seem more than flesh and blood can bear. . . . I know that I ought to bear it better, only that my prayers are all silent--I seem to have so little to ask for, nothing but that I may soon be reunited again to my dearest boys . . . in that above, which is dim, of which we know so little. (A & L 412)

As had always been the case, however, Oliphant's work went steadily onward. The Blackwood family had commissioned her, shortly before Cecco died, to write a history of their publishing house over the course of two or three years. Because Oliphant regarded this document, first, as "a most important piece of the recent history of literature, as well as many extremely interesting figures" (including herself) (A & L 404) and, second, as a much-desired source of regular income (the Blackwoods offered her L500 per year until the work's completion), Oliphant happily took on the project, which she "would very fain make . . . [her] last work" (A & L 414). The writing of the Blackwoods' history was, in a real sense, the writing of her own, almost indistinguishable, personal and professional memoirs, a fact that she notes in a letter to the last Blackwood who would ever employ her: "I began my married life by my first story in 'Maga'--the proofs of which ('Katie Stewart') I received on my wedding day: I should like to wind up the long laborious record (which seems to me now to have been so vain, so vain, my life all coming to nothing) with this" (A & L 414).

Still, Oliphant wrote--in or out of the sickbed that she took to more and more often during the last year of her life. At one point she observes, with detached interest, the toll that her incessant labour was finally taking on her body: "I have worked a hole in my right forefinger--with the pen I suppose!--and can't get it to heal,--also from excessive use of that little implement" (A & L 427). As her autobiography's editor, Annie Coghill, notes, "Work, which had been her comfort and stimulant, was beginning to be evidently burdensome. Even the crippling of her finger, where the pen seemed to have really worn through the skin by long usage, was both a symptom and an aggravation of her depressed physical condition" (A & L 431). In late April of

1897, Oliphant, to her great relief, entered the final stages of the illness that would end her life. When she could no longer write, she dictated. Finally, on June 25, she "softly passed away. The names of her boys were on her lips almost at the last, though she had said repeatedly, 'I seem to see nothing but God and our Lord'" (A & L 440).

Although Margaret Oliphant's passing left little material wealth to those who were left behind, it did bequeath a huge cultural and literary legacy to those who might appreciate the value of her "attempt[s] to deal with cultural changes . . . redefining who she and her millions of sisters [were] and should be" (Helsinger 140). As it happens, few have done so, perhaps for the very reasons that Oliphant herself offers as both an apology and an explanation for her incredible production and no-nonsense approach to her subjects and to her work:

> I was reading of Charlotte Bronte the other day [around Christmas of 1894], and could not help comparing myself with the picture more or less as I read. I don't suppose my powers are equal to hers--my work to myself looks perfectly pale and colourless beside hers--but yet I have had far more experience and, I think, a fuller conception of life. I have learned to take perhaps a man's view of mortal affairs,--to feel that the love between men and women, the marrying and giving in marriage, occupy in fact so small a portion of either existence or thought. When I die I know what people will say of me: they will give me credit for courage (which I almost think is not courage but insensibility), and for honesty and honourable dealing; they will say I did my duty with a kind of steadiness, not knowing how I have rebelled and groaned under the rod. (A & L 67)

On the one hand, Oliphant was right, at least in her assessment of what her experience, conception of life, and view of mortal affairs contributed to her work. She was also correct in believing that she would be admired for courage and honesty. On the other hand, she was wrong. Her considerable "powers" are very evident in the sampling of her fiction that will be considered here. She was also mistaken in her belief that no one would detect the rebellion and the groans against the dictates of duty that so circumscribed her own life and that of nearly every other woman of the Victorian period. By contrasting her representations of women to those of men in three of her Carlingford novels, we can "perceiv[e] or theoriz[e the] social organization" (Scott 94) that Oliphant was attempting to incorporate into her structural comparison of working life and feminine life. In the process, we will see that Oliphant responded to 'the woman question' with working models of femininity that did much to blur the distinctions between the tidy Victorian polarities of dependent domestic angel and independent public whore.

# Chapter Two
# Models of Womanhood

For the most part, Oliphant's female characters in The Chronicles of Carlingford are traditional constructions reflecting to various degrees the middle-class, Victorian virtues of self-effacement, self-control, dutiful obedience, service, dependence, and industriousness. Those who benefit directly from what Oliphant posits as an expression of 'authentic' femininity are always either children or men. For men to be seen as 'authentically' virtuous they must also display some measure of the selfless attributes, but agency, independence, rationality, and industriousness are the most obvious markers of the moral Victorian man (Davidoff, "'Adam Spoke First'" 233-36). Of these characteristics, industriousness is the most important to a clear understanding of Oliphant's work because it signals the presence of morality in both her female and male characters. It operates as a type of Foucauldian signifying field in which "meaning is . . . established relationally, . . . framed in an already existing (discursive) field, establishing new fields at the same time" (Scott 59). That is, through the particular configuration of an individual's industriousness, other moral attributes may be seen as more or less evident and operating to locate the character at some defining proximity to a sex-specific, 'authentic' moral identity that is dependent on labour to mediate its comprehensible expression.

As Mary Poovey indicates, this sort of representation is hardly unique in Victorian fiction; it is the pre-existing discursive field: "Whatever their differences, . . . almost all participants in the mid-nineteenth-century battles for social authority assumed and reinforced [the] binary model of difference articulated upon sex" (6). What is unique (or what comprises the new field that Oliphant creates) is this author's suggestion in The Chronicles that the foundation upon which the Victorians' perception of moral authenticity is constructed is a feminine concept. That is, industry, or work, necessarily brings a set of relations into existence in which the worker occupies a feminine position with respect to those for whom the labour is undertaken (Barrett 157). The extent to which the worker is able to realize this femininity as an essential aspect of his or her identity is precisely the extent to which he or she may be understood to be a 'truly' moral individual. Not only does industriousness itself generalize individual moral worth so that it may be identified across and within social classes, but also the particular object of the labour--or the end to which the labour is performed--specifies an individual's capacity to transcend class and spheres of existence so that moral benefit may be seen to work upon society at large (i.e. upon the nation).

In order to see how Oliphant operates within her culture's definitions of womanhood to draw parallels between labour relations and feminized relations (and, by extension, between the working 'being' and a necessarily feminized 'being'), I must examine, first, her models of femininity in order to locate industriousness as the source of virtuous identity in each. Then I will show that Oliphant posits a woman's intent to work for others both as an impulse to domesticity, regardless of the sphere in which she operates, and as the initiation of a set of relations within which selfless service becomes the most important identifying and identifiable characteristic. We will also see that Oliphant's use of "[t]his parallel, between the values of the household and those of employment," effectively appropriates the workplace as a possible site for the feminine reproduction of the middle class's domestic ideology (Rendall, Introduction 24). Finally, I will contrast this feminine means of self-determination through others with the object of male labour (which is also a measure of masculine morality). We will find that, for a man to be seen as truly masculine as well as truly moral, the only object he may have for his work is his own public identity.

To show this difference, and its implications for the growing number of Victorian women (including Oliphant herself) who found it necessary or desirable to work in more spheres than the domestic one to which tradition and ideology restricted them, I will examine closely, first, Oliphant's constructions of femininity and the determining role labour plays in each of the central female characterizations: Mrs. Vincent, Susan Vincent, and Mrs. Hilyard (Salem Chapel); Lucilla Marjoribanks, Barbara Lake, and Rose Lake (Miss Marjoribanks); Ursula May and Phoebe Beecham (Phoebe Junior). Then I will discuss the way in which Oliphant posits the development of masculine identity as a function of the male characters' ability to execute peculiarly self-referring forms of identifying labour. To this end I will examine the characterizations of Arthur Vincent (SC), Cavendish (MM), and Reginald May (PJ).

By keeping the investigative focus of this discussion on the characters' objects of labour, I will demonstrate the manner in which Oliphant negotiates between the Victorian issues of 'woman's work' and 'the working woman' both to incorporate terms that characterize each category into expressions of 'authentic womanhood' that are necessary to the Victorian perception of 'woman' as the cultural symbol of selfless middle-class morality and to differentiate these terms from those that define the realization of 'authentic manhood' as the production of the professional self. As is clear from this statement, Oliphant's (and her contemporaries') assumptions about the values that are inherent in class identity are inextricable from those she perceives in sexual identity. She sees them as mutually defining categories of existence. That is, she suggests that the superior tastes, norms, and values that underwrite the Victorian ascendancy of the middle class are 'natural' to 'authentic womanhood' and the 'merely social' identity of class guarantees the presence of those high standards in the 'truly' middle-class individual. This connection, and the laborious means of establishing it, are most readily discernible in Oliphant's construction of Mrs. Vincent, who is not so much a character as she is a working symbol of middle-class domestic ideology.

* * * * * * * * * *

Very little specific information is revealed about the character of Mrs. Vincent, the widowed mother of _Salem Chapel_'s protagonist, but a great deal may be deduced from her attitudes and comportment. Although we know nothing about her life prior to her marriage to Vincent's father, we can discern the middle-class moral principles upon which she based her life while the union lasted and the means by which she gauges her experience and determines her courses of action in the present. For instance, the domestic environment she created in order to raise her children after her husband's death reflects her desire for affiliation with the gentry and its values, and suggests that she has apparently relegated the lower social ranks to a position outside of the "good society" for which she has engendered a "taste" in her offspring (_SC_ ch. 2, 15). Arthur recalls, early in _SC_, the "painful gentility . . . which it took [his mother] so much pains and pinching to maintain" and "the contrast" this lifestyle creates when measured against the "distasteful" state of his "present affairs" among the petite bourgeoisie congregation of Carlingford's Dissenting chapel (ch. 2, 15). Clearly, "the strait cottage walls, [which] shut in the little picture" of genteel domesticity were also constructed to shut out contact with the kind of people by whom Arthur would, eventually, be employed and with whom he is completely unprepared to integrate himself at "five-and-twenty, a scholar and a gentleman": "Vincent had no special right to his own pretensions, but had come to them he could not tell how, and in reality, had his mind been on a level with his fortunes, ought to have found the Tozers and the Pigeons sufficiently congenial company" (SC ch. 2, 17-18). While Mrs. Vincent has evidently supplied an "imaginary [social and emotional] plenitude" (Poovey 97) when she closed access to and from her "limited household atmosphere" in the direction of the lower orders, she has left open a wide and positive view of society's upper reaches (SC ch. 5, 48). It is this world that fills Arthur's eyes and mind when he first arrives in Carlingford:

> In his imagination Mr. Vincent saw himself admitted to all these [celestial scenes of] social pleasures; not that he cared for capital dinners more than became a young man, or had any special tendencies towards tuft-hunting, but because fancy and hope, and ignorance of the real world, made him naturally project himself into the highest sphere within his reach, in the simple conviction that such was his natural place. (SC ch. 1, 6)

As Arthur has indicated, the sheltered little world that shaped his ideas about his "natural place" has been maintained with great effort on the part of Mrs. Vincent. Appearances of conservative gentility have been supported at the cost of both personal comfort and social affiliation with a class of people about whom Mrs. Vincent has intimate knowledge. It is this maternal labour, which Shuttleworth says is "a mode of social production vital to the middle class's maintenance of power," that constitutes the Vincent family's privately-held vision of their own superior status and moral integrity in the Dissenting community (32).

When a panic-stricken Mrs. Vincent arrives at Carlingford to consult her son about the "stranger who had crept into the house and gained ascendancy there" (SC ch. 5, 51), she immediately begins to assert the superior correctness of her 'natural' standards for domestic order (those that are apparently reflective of the irresistible dictates of maternal instinct) over the less-rigorous, professional standards of Arthur's landlady (or those levels of care that are adopted to serve the pecuniary ends of a saleable domesticity):

> 'Does [the lantern] always smoke?' repeated Mrs. Vincent, calmly putting on the chimney. 'I don't think it would if you were very exact in putting this on. Look here: always at this height, don't you see? and now it burns perfectly well.'. . . Mrs. Vincent sat down at the table with all the satisfaction of success and conscious virtue. (SC ch. 12, 126-27)

In addition to the obvious humour of this passage, which asks us to smile over the widow's attention to petty domestic details at a time of pending moral crisis, we can also see evidence, in Mrs. Vincent's display of homely 'busy-ness', of her understanding that domestic exactitude is form of social discourse through which middle-class moral rectitude is articulated. As Scott points out, "there is always a [class and class-conscious] politics--in the sense of a power relationship--in the operations of discourse" (57). In this light, Mrs. Vincent's use of her industrious virtue to protect her son's status and name from the potential diminution guaranteed by congregational gossip suggests that she is attempting to maintain the social power of the middle-class woman's 'natural' morality in the face of a threat emanating from the public realm in which reputations (both personal and professional) are established and made effective determinants of the subject's quality of life. Throughout the narrative Mrs. Vincent labours mightily (and often in vain) to erect the barrier of moral comportment between private reality and public appearance. By doing so she hopes to translate the superior truth of 'natural' private virtue into social or public substance. It is both her expression of her "definitive characteristic [as a woman]--maternal instinct" (Poovey 7) and her attempt to prevent what she sees as an impending public determination of her family's moral identity. That is, she hopes to articulate a more real (because apparently naturally-derived) morality by which she may reduce the probability of truth in the 'merely social' impositions upon the Vincents' reputation. Her virtuous industry in Arthur's purchased domesticity is, thus, a public re-creation of a power-laden private reality that 'naturally' resists false or misleading social identification. It is the only way that she can compensate for and recuperate the damage caused by allowing an apparent imposter (who is, by implication, not a 'real' affiliate of the Vincents) into her selflessly-maintained, middle-class sanctuary.

At no point is her effort expended in her own interests (except in so far as her stake in her children's lives represents the meaning of her existence); always, it is offered in the service of her children's moral identities. During the present crisis over the possible penetration of her genteel enclosure by a "'man that goeth about seeking whom he may devour'" (SC ch. 12, 124), Mrs. Vincent can only perform the domestic labours that will help her distinguish supportive allies from corruptive opponents according to the middle-class ideology from which she derives her moral authority. She performs her maternal work, as she always has, to fortify her domestic world against infringement by socially-derived identities. It is an effective strategy. Because of it the landlady--a paid mother-surrogate--is seen as inferior to Mrs. Vincent and, thus, as an inappropriate judge or measure of the family's 'true' worth and the imposter is constructed as an immoral saboteur of the family's 'true' identity. It is also, however, a limiting strategy. Mrs. Vincent cannot 'publicly' pursue the villain and maintain her powerful private status because such an act would cause the widow to fall silent in the discourse of domestic morality and to speak publicly of her potential failure in maternal duty and vigilance: "'Oh, my dear, I must not speak, or something will happen to me; and nothing must happen to you or me till we have found your sister'" (SC ch. 18, 199). It would constitute an explicit breach of the consistency that Poovey says possessed "epistemelogical centrality" to Victorian women's understanding of who they 'really' were (9). For this reason, Mrs. Vincent cannot either openly express knowledge of the public realm, or actively participate in its operations and still be perceived as a highly-valued domestic specialist. The public realm is the place in which only the "full strength of . . . manhood and independence" may be fully realized (SC ch. 12, 131). This active role is appropriately reserved for Arthur. Mrs. Vincent may only adopt the passive public stance of the truly moral middle-class woman and this she does "with the mingled passion and patience of a woman . . . holding up Arthur's standard at this dangerous crisis of the battle" (SC ch. 21, 230). It is a maternal labour in which the mother "offer[s herself as] a sacrifice and burnt-offering as she dressed herself in her snow-white cuffs, and composed her trim little figure into its Sunday neatness;

for the minister's mother must go to chapel this dreadful day. No whisper of the torture she was enduring must breathe among the flock" (SC ch. 21, 230). The narrator later informs us that "this was how the minister's mother, in the depths of unknown anguish and calamity, was expected to exert herself, the only way she could serve her son" (SC ch. 22, 251). It is her enactment of what Shuttleworth calls

> [the i]deals of motherhood [which] had to perform important ideological work [in Victorian culture]; they helped constitute and maintain the gendered social hierarchy and its division of labour, they vindicated the middle class's claims to social leadership through moral superiority, and sanctioned, by their maintenance of a strict division between the realms of home and work, whatever questionable practices the bourgeois male might have to pursue. (32)

Within the structure of the novel, it is Mrs. Vincent's unflagging dedication to the industrious maintenance of domestic order that is associated with Susan's return to safety rather than Arthur's frantic quest. After two chapters devoted to the description of this woman's patient and laborious articulation of moral integrity, Susan materializes in the narrative and in her mother's arms: "Nobody knew how she had got in, where she had come from; no one was with her--no one had admitted her. She sat a marble woman in the chair where they had placed her, unresistant, only gazing, gazing--turning her awful eyes after her mother" (SC ch. 23, 262-63). Dr. Rider, who is summoned to tend the stricken girl, calls on "the woman who was still the minister's mother, and even in this hideous dream of misery, had not forgotten the habits of her life:" "'No one can bring her to life but you,' said the doctor, turning the face of the miserable mother towards her child. 'She has kept her senses till she reached you; when she was here she no longer wanted them; she has left her life in your hands'" (SC ch. 23, 267-68).

Once again Mrs. Vincent becomes "deaf and insensible to everything but her child" (SC ch. 26, 297). This time, however, the dedication proves futile. Although this failure may seem to suggest that domestic labour is ineffective in its recuperative capacity, Mrs. Vincent's mothering has achieved all it can within the narrative. Agency, or free will, is an important aspect of moral existence and now Susan must show her will to realize the type of woman her mother has so ably typified with her domesticity. That is, not until Susan herself understands the need for her to take up her own domestic labour will she be reanimated into full, meaningful middle-class life. As Scott says it will, "the feminine [has been] used to construct conceptions of class" (89), and now those notions of affiliation will determine perceptions of Susan's re-entry into moral femininity.

Like her brother, Susan Vincent has been raised in the little closed household that restricts her contact with people other than "their little servant, and a feminine neighbour or two" (SC ch. 5, 49). When Mildmay enters this quiet feminine enclave, the letters that emanate from it change in nature. They become written in "words the symbols of life . . . quickened and running in a fuller current." The increasing amount of Susan's domestic world that Mildmay "gain[s] possession of" is in direct proportion to "the gradually shortening" account of her own movements that she articulates to her brother. Instead of telling about herself, as usual, Susan's letters now "perpetually referred to [Mildmay]." This transfer of her attention from her limited domestic sphere to the more worldly society that revolves around a suitor is, in Mrs. Vincent's view, the beginning of Susan's being "happily provided for." Arthur acknowledges the implicit servitude of the possible relationship when he refers to the "stranger . . . without any special business there, who had no profession," as the future "master of her affections" (SC ch. 5, 51). Vincent's thoughts suggest that the conquest of female affections, and the male identity-opportunity that is offered as a consequence (Mildmay would automatically acquire power and position as the "master" of an estimable middle-class woman), is tantamount to a business transaction within which his sister will be determined by the nature of the relationship that she contracts to enter into. "[H]alf in concern for Susan, half in jealousy for Susan's brother [who was] eclipsed, but believing himself to be entirely actuated by the former sentiment," Arthur worries that Mildmay will "turn out as unsatisfactory as Salem Chapel" in his role as a determining source of worthy identity (SC ch. 5, 51-52):

> Nature awoke and yearned in him. A momentary glimpse crossed his vision of a humble happiness long within his reach, which never till now, when it was about to become impossible for ever, had seemed real or practicable, or even desirable before.
>
> 'Mother, dear,' said Vincent, with a tremulous smile, 'you shall come here, Susan and you, to me; and we shall be together again--and comfort each other,' he added with a deeper gravity still, thinking of his own lot.
>
> (SC ch. 12, 131)

Although the precise nature of Susan's potential service to Arthur is unclear, the young man's "natural yearning" for her is suggested as a solution to the girl's moral danger. That is, Arthur has domestic work for Susan by which she may identify herself appropriately. Unfortunately, Mildmay also has a position for her in his domestic affairs, though it is one that proves to be utterly illegitimate.

As Mildmay's machinations to acquire his daughter gain both momentum and effectiveness, Susan's silence and absence grows within the moral domestic sphere formed by her mother and her brother. After one last letter from her (SC ch. 14, 152), Arthur and his mother discover Mildmay's true identity ("'Ruin, misery, and horror at the least--death to Susan--not much less to [Arthur]'" [SC ch. 15, 164]) and rush to Lonsdale to find that Susan has disappeared into an "abyss" of indeterminacy (SC ch. 18, 200). The master/servant relationship that the narrative previously associated with

Susan's being provided for has been engaged, but without the economic guarantees of marriage having been secured. Without these material symbols of class, Susan's affiliation and the labour she performs within it must define her: "the accursed villain . . . had managed to get her into his power[.] Susan's sweet life was lost, her brother knew" (SC ch. 19, 209). Without precise, legitimating knowledge of the nature of the work Susan is to perform within this potentially "polluting" relationship, she becomes "the sullied lily" and Arthur despairs that "never henceforward could hope or honour blossom about [her] name" (SC ch. 19, 209). Her moral feminine being has winked out of middle-class existence.

When Susan reappears in her brother's rooms, her functional indeterminacy deprives her of both sex and humanity. She is an "it . . . rising darkly, rising slowly, out of the shadows in which it had been crouching, a huddled indistinct figure" (SC ch. 23, 262). Although Susan's body reassumes a recognizable form to her mother, the girl's complete passivity continues to deny her even the vestiges of a meaningful identity. Oliphant suggests, here, that Mrs. Vincent's claim to a connection with "it" is an arbitrary act of charitable maternity:

> [C]ould it be Susan who stood there, without a word, without a movement, only with a blank gaze at the horrified woman, who dared to meet those dreadful eyes? When life rallied in Mrs. Vincent's horror-stricken heart, she went to the ghastly creature, and put warm arms around it, and

> called it Susan. (SC ch. 23, 162)

At first, Mrs. Vincent's embrace appears to help--Susan "seemed to come to herself"--but the only words the girl can utter are those that specify her nominal affiliation with the moral Vincents:

> 'I am Susan Vincent,' said the awful ghost. No tears, nor cries, nor wild pressures of her mother's arms, nor entreaties poured into her cold ear, could extract any other words. . . . It began to shiver with dreadful trembling fits--to be convulsed with long gasping sobs. 'I am--Susan--Susan Vincent,' it said at intervals, with a pitiful iteration. (SC ch. 23, 263)

When Dr. Rider lances a vein in the "white marble arm" of the "grand form" that Susan has become, the sight of the blood rouses her to an incoherent passion that the watching group interprets as a display of guilt:

> Fever of the heart and brain, burning up into a consuming frenzy, had seized upon this lost creature, who was no longer a girl or innocent. Ere long they had to send for nurses, to restrain her delirium. She, raving with a wild madness which betrayed in every wandering exclamation the horror upon her soul, lay desperate in the room which had enclosed for so many lingering hours her mother's anguish of suspense and fear.
> (SC ch. 23, 270)

This passage supports the opinion of Helsinger et al, voiced in their response to Oliphant's review of a sensation novel, that "Oliphant . . . fears that the strong passions which alienate woman from her [moral] 'womanhood' will also alienate her from womankind" (140).

Although Mrs. Vincent is frightened for Susan, the "fever . . . afforded a kind of comfort to the mother--a proof that her child had not lost her innocence lightly" (SC ch. 25, 288). While Susan was completely still, she signified neither womanhood nor humanity and was considered morally dead. Now that she raves and thrashes, she signifies the effective operation of an animating conscience on a fully-feminized, if hopelessly fallen, soul:

> That frightful, tropical blaze of passion, anguish and woe which had produced this sudden development [of sublimity, elevation, and majesty in Susan's appearance], had it developed no unknown qualities in Susan's heart? As she lay there in the majesty of unconsciousness, she resembled more a woman who could avenge herself, than a soft girl, the sudden victim of a bad man. (SC ch. 25, 289)

Arthur responds "with an involuntary shudder" to the evidence of an awakened capacity for self-determination and agency within his sister. He cannot read from her behaviour the exact nature of the relationship from which she has derived her suddenly-mature identity, but he fears that her passionate womanhood has enabled her to turn on the "master of her affections" (SC ch. 5, 51). Arthur knows that feminine self-service is even less socially defensible than Mildmay's suspected abduction and seduction. A powerful act of self-defense would spell Susan's doom both materially and morally: "Would it not be better if she died and escaped that crowning misery, which must kill her anyhow, if she survived to bear it?" (SC ch. 26, 290).

Susan does not die, however, and Mildmay exonerates her while she is still unconscious:

> So far as the words of this apparently dying man

> could be received, Susan was spotless--without blood on her hand, or speck upon her good fame. The lesser and the greater guilt were both cleared from that young head which had not been strong enough to wait for this vindication. . . . [W]ho could tell whether this vindication might be of any further use than to lighten the cloud upon Susan's grave? (SC ch. 29, 322)

Interestingly, the blood that the narrative has suggested as a sign of guilt is her own, and it 'stained' her only after it was released by the doctor (a professional care-giver). The implication of this connection is that the 'merely economic' nurturer somehow subverts the inherent morality of the middle-class woman so that the very signs of her inborn innocence (her illness and her middle-class blood) become evidence of her guilt. Caught in this double bind, Susan can do nothing to save herself. She must not display the autonomous strength of a self-rescuing damsel. Her former "master" must release her from the bondage of suspicion. Only then may she act, and then only upon herself, to confirm what a watching public already knows.

Because Susan wakens from her delirium without being told of the change in her public status (her exoneration), the narrative implies that the workings of her feminine conscience (her private determinations about the value of her 'natural' identity) parallel the social perception of her function as a woman at so intimate a level that she unconsciously creates a 'self' that conforms to public expectations of respectability. That is, no longer does Susan bear the "greater guilt" of being publicly thought to be a fallen woman (SC ch. 29, 322), so no longer does she require the "greater . . . penalty" of debilitating madness (SC ch. 26, 299). Still, she does not recover completely. She remains inert, "in dumb apathy," with nothing in her lightened guilt "powerful enough to rouse the soul which horror and passion had driven into one terrible corner of memory, obliterating all the rest of her life" (SC ch. 35, 377; ch. 37, 403). As if in response to the change in public opinion about her innocence, Susan has stopped the disordered discourse of feminine immorality, but has no meaningful way, as yet, of manifesting the womanly moral order that has replaced her girlish innocence. She lacks an appropriate object to which she may dedicate the realization of her womanly being. To work toward bringing a moral 'self' into existence only for her own sake would constitute her as self-sufficient. Such 'self-full-ness' is not 'natural' or appropriate to the moral Victorian woman. Therefore, Susan can only wait within her continuing indeterminacy of moral significance, that "obscured and hopeless firmament" within which Susan is " abstracted . . . out of this world and all of its influences" (SC ch. 37, 406, 403).

Without purposeful activity, or industrious endeavour, Susan can exist only as an idea of moral womanhood. It takes the "helpless" and "half-articulate" Alice's "outcry of childish impatience and despair"--"'Susan! I care for nobody but you! . . . You are to take care of me'"--to motivate the "conscious effort" that will give Susan both moral substance and real feminine presence (SC ch. 37, 406). Responsibility for Alice becomes Susan's "occupation" and makes her fully "'a woman . . . a great deal stronger than her mother . . . and steadier than [Arthur] and [the widow]'" (SC ch. 41, 445-46). Unlike Mrs. Vincent, who seems only a symbolic maternal figure, Susan is now a fully-realized nurturing woman. Under the influence of her conscious commitment to care for Alice, she becomes a "visible tangible creature," a "grand figure, large and calm and noble like a Roman woman," whose "air of quiet command and power" communicates itself without words to every eye that beholds her (SC ch. 43, 458-59). In effect, she becomes the embodiment of maternal instinct, a figure that occupied a great deal (if not all) of the influential cultural space allotted to Victorian women. Susan acknowledges her substantiated (and individualized) moral significance and authority in "a low liquid voice, fuller than the common tones of women" when she, Alice, and Mrs. Vincent rejoin Arthur after three years living abroad:

> 'Arthur does not know me. . . . He thinks you cannot have anything so big belonging to you, my little mother. . . . I was little . . . when we went away. At least I was little in Lonsdale, where nobody minded me. Somehow most people mind me now, because I am so big.' (SC ch. 43, 459)

Oliphant suggests that this authority will be fully expressed and recognized within the occupation that made it possible. She has constructed a feminized working space within which the moral woman may bring herself into being through the expression of her 'authentic self,' or her maternal instinct.

Susan's willing labour has made her too large a feminine presence either to be contained within the "little picture" of domesticity created by her mother or to be erased again from moral existence (SC ch. 5, 48). Her legitimated dedication to the service of another transforms the moral vulnerability of her youthfully inert "simple graces" (SC ch. 5, 51) to the powerful determinant of her purposeful "majestic maiden grace" (SC ch. 43, 460). Now and forever Susan is one of the "real creatures, who [does] not vanish away," but makes "[l]ife . . . glorious" for others (SC ch. 43, 460-61). Clearly, she is capable of restoring "the imaginary plenitude" (Poovey 97) which constituted the secure social identity Arthur presumed he was destined for in his fond memories of his youth (SC ch. 5, 48). She is able, through her work with and for Alice, to transform the "very odd . . . sort of grown-up baby" (SC ch. 4, 156) from a completely self-absorbed creature whose only interest is the gratification of her "very strong will" (SC ch. 38, 410) into "'a little wise woman'" of lightness and domestic harmony (SC ch. 43, 459-60). It is an effect made possible by the self-realizing impulse of an inherently moral feminine identity (motherhood) and one that is actualized by the nurturing industry of woman's "[t]rue selfhood . . . [that] only comes with successful maternity" (Shuttleworth 35).

Another working woman in SC is Rachel Russell Mildmay, known throughout the novel as Mrs. Hilyard, who must labour over 'slops' to support and protect herself and her daughter from the self-serving machinations of her aristocratic husband. Clearly, she did not always need to work. In fact, one of the most prominent aspects of her former identity as the wife of Colonel Mildmay and a member of the gentry was the self-indulgent idleness that marked her as "a gentlewoman" (SC ch. 6, 64) who had no need of "trying to please" anyone but her husband and who was "an authority" only on "fine manners" (or the methodology of social correctness) (SC ch. 9, 94). Although the details of her marriage are never fully disclosed, Hilyard reveals that she is

> 'a woman that was once young and had friends. They married me to a man, who was not a man, but a fine organisation capable of pleasures and cruelties. . . . You do not know what it is, [Mrs. Vincent,] when one is young and happy, to find out all at once that life means only so much torture and misery, and so many lies, either done by you or borne by you--what does it matter which? My baby came into the world with a haze on her sweet soul because of that discovery.' (SC ch. 37, 394)

This description, in Shuttleworth's terms, associates "the economic values of regulation, order, and restraint . . . with the middle class . . . while the messier, physical aspects of maternity and sexual desire are connected with upper-class indiscipline" (48). The consequences of such an ideological alignment is that class may operate as a sign of generalized character that refers to selflessness as a measure of morality. As long as Hilyard remains affiliated with the landed gentry, she is a dehumanized participant in the "'organisation . . . of pleasures and cruelties'" (SC ch. 37, 394), "a terrifying model [held up to middle-class women] of immoral, socially degenerative conduct" (Shuttleworth 47). These limited and negative choices do not allow her a full (or acceptable) expression of the commitment she has made, as a mother, to the promotion of another's moral well-being, that of her child:

> '[I]f she lives, she will be rich. . . . [Y]ou don't know what my fears were," continued Mrs. Hilyard, with a strange humility, once more putting her hand on the widow's arm. 'If he could have got possession of her, how could I tell what he might have done?--killed her--but that would have been dangerous; poisoned what little mind she had left--made her like her mother. I stole her away. . . . I stole her out of his power. . . . I have not seen her but in glimpses, lest he should find her. It has cost me all I had, and I have lived and worked with my hands,' said the needlewoman of Back Grove Street, lifting her thin fingers to the light and looking at them, pathetic vouchers to the truth of her story. (SC ch. 37, 394)

From Hilyard's revelation, we now know both the nature of the mysterious corruption that awaited Susan at the mastering hands of "the villain" (SC ch. 19, 209)--seduction--and the importance of 'correct' mothering to the shaping of worthwhile young women. Oliphant reveals, here, that the degree to which maternity is appropriately expressed (through labour for the child) is precisely commensurate with the degree to which the child is morally secure. Hilyard labours with her hands to effect that security.

As elsewhere in Oliphant's descriptions of Hilyard, the needlewoman's hands figure prominently. They are the transformed symbols of her former idle immorality (the state of being into which Mildmay "'poisoned'" her with his sadistic sensuality) and the identifying marks of her acceptably autonomous, industrious maternity (Poovey 84-85). The money Hilyard receives for the "rough work which [Arthur] could not help observing sometimes made her scarred fingers bleed as it passed rapidly through them" (SC ch. 2, 21) is given over to the necessarily-distant upbringing of Alice. The consequent poverty, anonymity, and assumed morality of a labouring woman constitutes the only protection from her husband's influence for which Hilyard may hope. Here, "women working [does not] signal social degeneration," as was often the case in Victorian fiction, but safety and stability (Poovey 153). She speaks of the moral refuge that a working identity may be to Arthur when he worries about her safety in the dark streets of Carlingford:

> 'Thank you, I am perfectly safe--nobody can possibly be safer than such a woman as I am, in poverty and middle age . . . It is an immunity that women don't often prize, Mr. Vincent, but it is very valuable in its way. If anybody saw you talking to an equivocal female figure at eleven

> o'clock in George Street, think what the butterman would say; but a single glimpse of my face would explain matters better than a volume.' (SC ch. 9, 89)

The identifying features of the working woman are articulations that specify moral existence in the social discourse of feminine life.

Hilyard's identity at the outset of SC is completely determined by and indistinguishable from the work that she labours over "in a little house in the close lane dignified by the name of Back Grove Street" where she occupies "a shabby room, only half-carpeted, up two pair of stairs, which looked out upon no more lively a view than the back of Salem Chapel itself, with its few dismal scattered graves" (SC ch. 2, 19-20). In these rooms, she sits, a sentinel to the ended lives below, "working at 'slops' till the colour came off upon her hands, and her poor thin fingers bled--she so strangely superior to her surroundings, yet not despising or quarreling with them, or even complaining of them" (SC ch. 2, 23). The evidence of the genteel identity that she once possessed contrasts sharply with the pretensions to social position displayed by the tradespeople amongst whom Hilyard now hides herself:

> Extreme thinness of outline and sharpness of line made the contrast between this educated countenance and the faces which had lately surrounded the young minister still more remarkable. It was not a profound or elevated kind of education, perhaps, but it was very different from the thin superficial lacker with which Miss Phoebe was coated. (SC ch. 2, 19)

The necessity for work, it seems, has rubbed through the thin skin of Hilyard's 'society' accomplishments; an "intense wear and strain of life [that] have worn to so thin a tissue the outer garment of this keen and sharp-edged soul" (SC ch. 2, 20). That is, Hilyard's need to reproduce herself as a working woman lays bare the scars and blood of a labouring mother, the identifying marks of a life dedicated to service for another. It is her means of embodying the maternal ideal "of industry and reproductive success" (Shuttleworth 36). Hilyard has given up the self and self-indulgence of her former social identity to protect the moral identity of her child. She cannot participate directly in the private-sphere shaping of Alice's inner self, but she can work so that the nurturing project is made possible. Dorothy Thompson says that this arrangement would not have been seen as a moral one to Oliphant's contemporaries because

> [t]he strange ideology . . . of the moral superiority of women rested partly on the concept of the home as a haven of purity, and, far from raising the status of women in any but the most marginal areas, it must . . . have lowered her authority since women who worked outside . . . [the] family were in a sense automatically degraded. (80)

Oliphant denies this conclusion, however, when she suggests, through Hilyard's character, that woman's economic labour is interchangeable with domestic labour. That is, the protective, maternal relationship is identically self-abnegating in both instances of service and "the wages [a woman] earn[s] . . . [become] the key to her integrity and independence" (Scott 103). Throughout the novel, Oliphant reinforces the structural similarities of the working roles by consistently associating Hilyard's "thin fingers . . . scarred . . . and stained" by her perpetual work in "the coarse blue stuff" with the blue veil behind which her daughter is protected from coming under Mildmay's immoral influence (SC ch.11, 118). It is a representation that "employ[s] cultural associations between femininity and domesticity to insist on the authenticity of women who earned wages, to legitimate their wage-earning as a female activity, and to establish their 'interests' [in paid labour] as unique to their sex" (Scott 104).

As long as Hilyard's identity remains wholly determined by her maternal relationship to her child, she is represented as a primarily moral figure. The only qualification to the narrative's support of Hilyard's arduous lifestyle rests in her mysteriousness because it suggests that some aspect of Hilyard's identity is not contained by the humble industry that constitutes her apparent domestic integrity, but is operating outside of that authenticating sphere toward different, unspecifiable ends. Arthur unconsciously alludes to the potential destabilization of moral identity that may result from Hilyard's lack of complete enclosure within her quotidian life when he reads his mother's letters:

> No mysterious horror, no whispering doubtful gloom, surrounded that house from which the pure, full daylight atmosphere, untouched by any darkness, breathed fresh upon him out of these simple pages. Here, in this humble virtuous world, were no mysteries. It was a deliverance to a heart which had begun to falter. (SC ch. 9, 97)

In contrast to the lightness and legibility associated with Mrs. Vincent's decidedly "virtuous world," darkness underwrites Hilyard's ambiguity. When the needlewoman lays down her "sweated domestic work" for her child (Thompson 64) and takes up a role as an active, determining agent of life and death (that is, she no longer depends on her relationship to others for her identity, but makes another's life contingent on her ability to execute her vow for vengeance, or her power and will [SC ch. 10, 107]), she loses substance in the "daylight atmosphere" of Mrs. Vincent's moral domesticity; "[i]nto the darkness . . . [she] disappeared" (SC ch. 17, 196). She is no longer the passive sentinel overlooking the remains of life. She is now "diabolical and out of nature," "a conscious Death . . . gone into the black night and the chill space" of female autonomy. In effect, she becomes her own rescuing knight in a way that the moral model of motherhood, Mrs. Vincent, refused to do. Hilyard arbitrarily appropriates the male-identified operations of the legal system with her self-determined authorization to specify "the injustice both of the individual villain and the laws that [will] refuse her justice" (Poovey 69). Her reversal of the traditional male/female positions of determining power denies her access to industry as a means of re-establishing her moral identity when she next materializes in the light of day:

> She had no more power to move [Arthur] in her own person than any one of the ragged children who stood gazing up at the window. . . . She had dared [persons, scaffolds, and judgements] wittingly in the crisis of her fate, but the reality caught the labouring breath from her lips, and turned her heart sick. . . . Many evils she had borne in her life--many she had confronted and overcome--obstinate will and unscrupulous resolution had carried her one way or another through all former dangers. Here for the first time she stood helpless, watching with an indescribable agony the face of the ["inexorable"] young man ["who had it in his power to deliver her over to law and justice"]. (SC ch. 28, 313-14)

As a working woman, Hilyard's "living martyrdom" allowed Arthur to know her as a moral defender of identifiable (and identifying) virtues against corruption by the absolute social power of rank and privilege (SC ch. 11,116). When she gives up the labour that empowered her personal integrity, however, Hilyard becomes an "incomprehensible woman" to Arthur (SC ch. 27, 309). As Mary Poovey says happened to Caroline Norton in similar circumstances, "her revelation of the role politics and money have played in her domestic woes, have already collapsed the very differences she seems to support" and from which she derived her autonomous authority (69). This indeterminacy then must become subject to another interpretive scheme; the only other one available is the purely social reading of her being that will be executed by the legal system, which will assess her conduct according to principles "derive[d] not only from legal definitions [of those who appropriately wield power] but from customary expectations [about class and gender]" (Thompson 58). Hilyard responds to this threat of institutionalized judgement by claiming an identity based solely on the social category of class--that of "'disguised princess'"--and by hiding the signs of the self that are vulnerable to Vincent's moral re-identification beneath the finery of the idle aristocracy and the presumptive superiority that immunizes the higher classes against the divisive penetration of those in the lower ranks:

> Mrs. Hilyard did not speak, but she put out her hand and touched Lady Western's shawl, lifting its long fringes, and twisting them round those fingers on which the marks of her long labour were still visible. She withdrew as she did this her eyes from [Vincent's] face. . . .
>
> 'Ladies,' said Vincent, . . . 'it is better you should leave this place at once. . . . You are her shield and her defence,' he said, looking at Lady Western . . . 'When she touches you she becomes sacred. You will keep her safe--safe? you will not let her go?'
>
> (SC ch. 28, 318-20)

The social world that now "enclos[es] the other" also "shut[s Arthur] out" (SC ch. 31, 151) and the young minister fears that Hilyard will escape all consequences for her "mysterious wickedness" (SC ch. 31, 348). Hilyard understands, however, that "'there is no escape--not in this world. . . . [T]here is enough of retribution here. The criminal--Mr. Vincent--you know--will not escape'" (SC ch.

39, 426-27). In order to "'go back to society and the world,'" Hilyard must give up her capacity "'to manage [her] own affairs'" (SC ch. 39, 424) or, in Linda Shires' words, she must give up her identity as a self-determined agent who is "dialectically constructed so as to allow for dissent and critique [of the ideology that has constituted her] from within" (188). That is, she must surrender both the opportunity to labour for her child to another, who is not restricted by the her affiliation with a 'merely social' category of being, as well as the moral identity that implicitly criticized the class criterion for true individual status. As we have seen, it is Susan Vincent who acquires the industriously moral presence for which Hilyard proved herself unsuitable when she worked her determining will directly upon others rather than deferring it into the acceptable channel of indirect service.

# Chapter Three
## Domestic Labour and Social Authority

Another woman of great will and autonomous tendencies in Oliphant's writing is Lucilla Marjoribanks, the character from whom the fifth story in The Chronicles, Miss Marjoribanks, derives its title. Both the Colbys and Merryn Williams comment on the novel's lack of plot, but only Williams notes two of Oliphant's letters to John Blackwood in which she says, first, "The story is a story without a plot from its very nature," and, second, "It is to bring out Miss Marjoribanks that is the aim of the story, and not to attempt any complications of plot" (81). In keeping with Oliphant's intent, MM is a record of quotidian life in which Lucilla is depicted as a traditionally educated girl ("enlightened by novels and popular philosophy . . . so that [her] mind had been cultivated, and was brimful of the best of sentiments") whose "virtuous resolutions" (MM ch. 1, 25) after her mother's death "'ma[k]e her a woman'" (MM ch. 1, 31). These resolutions include her intent to "sacrifice her own feelings," "devote herself to her father's comfort," and make "a great many changes . . . in the household," particularly in the social role that the household plays in the limited society of Carlingford (MM ch. 1, 26). Although the Colbys find Lucilla a rather repellent heroine, calling her "smug, self-centered, [and] self-righteous" (65), these characteristics also constitute much of the novel's (often caustic) humour and much of its (often relentless) realism.

The Colbys' comment also overlooks the narrator's frank analysis of Lucilla's thoughts and actions and it is this dissecting voice that distinguishes Lucilla from other fictional Victorian heroines and reveals what Andrew Blake perceives as Oliphant's "extensive concern with social, political and economic changes, and especially with the direction these changes should take" (97).

Without the narrator's cynical revelations, Lucilla's actions would seem merely virtuous and impossibly exemplary. Through the constant commentary, however, Oliphant reveals the sentimental Victorian script for the respectable woman, recognizable by her dedication to the service of others, as a complex enactment of prescribed feminine comportment in which a selfless semblance disguises a determined self-service:

> These were the external characteristics of the girl who was going home to be a comfort to her widowed father, and meant to sacrifice herself to his happiness. In the course of her rapid journey she had already settled upon everything that had to be done; or rather to speak truly, had rehearsed everything, according to the habit already acquired by a quick mind, a good deal occupied with itself. (MM ch. 1, 27)

Lucilla's self-sacrifice is rebuffed, however, and she is dispatched back to school "with a sense, not only of defeat, but of disappointment and mortification" over the "postpone[ment of] her reign" and a determination to "learn all about political economy and things, to help [her] manage everything" (MM ch. 1, 32-33). To further her domestic ambitions, she turns a minor defeat into an important opportunity to improve herself. She goes on a grand tour of Europe which Lucilla "took . . . all in the way of business, as she had taken her French and her German and her singing and her political economy . . . [to] fit herself . . . for an illustrious reign at home" (MM ch. 2, 40). This emphasis, on the importance of formal training to her domestic ambitions, reflects Oliphant's attempt to insert the private-sphere work of women into an emergent cultural discourse about modes of social production and reproduction, particularly those modes which promoted the material interests of the middle and upper classes (Newton 4-5). Newton also observes that the promotion of those interests "based on self-interest [becomes] a key to moral progress as well as to material well-being [and is] a strategy for joining forces with entrepreneurs by displacing entrepreneurial values onto higher ground" (5). Such an intervention also reveals the cultural perception of inadequacy surrounding traditional domestic skills in "the development of rigid career structures in business and professional life" (Thompson 67).

When Lucilla arrives in Carlingford, she feels

> [a] sense of coming home, warmer than she remembered to have felt before . . . Not that the words bore any special tender meaning, notwithstanding that it was the desire of her heart, well known to all her friends, to live henceforward as a comfort to dear papa, but that now at last she was coming into her kingdom, and entering the domain in which she intended her will

> to be law. (MM ch. 4, 47)

The unsentimental tone of this description of Lucilla's feelings allows readers to perceive and trace the political nature of the connection between female service to others and the domestic authority this service vested in women. As Jane Rendall notes, the material, ethical, and educational superiority suggested by a woman's ability to supplement those in need (who are, by definition, in a position of want or of inferior capacity) implicitly acknowledges the authoritative right and the moral obligation of those who 'have' to govern the affairs of those who 'have not' (Introduction 22-23). Here in MM, the moral feminine imperative to serve is translated into an overt discourse of power in which the ethical character of the woman is presumed on the basis of her specifically middle-class identity and training. It is not an issue under investigation. Michele Barrett says that these acquired "skill[s], in the sense of technical expertise, . . . gave legitimation to the control or authority of particular individuals" (167). That is, Lucilla's determination and ability to execute "the first duties of a woman"--entertaining and arranging everything domestic for her male superior--effectively displaces her father from his position as the domestic head, consolidates her authority as the new domestic "dictator," and validates her moral femininity: "The Doctor said nothing but 'Humph!' and even that in an undertone; but he became aware all the same that he had abdicated, without knowing it, and that the reins of state had been smilingly withdrawn from his unconscious hands" (MM ch. 4, 50-51). Because the rhetoric of this homely coup conflates domestic rule with national rule, Oliphant suggests that Lucilla's specifically middle-class education in the rational principles of political economy "open[s] up the public sphere to feminine appropriation [in a way that] the overtly . . . paternalistic ideologies of landed men did not" (Newton 7). Within moments of being in the house, Lucilla "harmonise[s its] rooms, by . . . rearranging half the chairs and covering the tables with trifles of her own" (MM ch. 4, 50). These acts create a domestic unity, coherence, and order from the "waste and howling wilderness" of the Doctor's masculine domestic world that is entirely dependent on the full display "of the character of [the house's] mistress" (MM ch. 4, 48, 50).

The filial mission Lucilla proposes to undertake subsumes her intent "to revolutionise society in Carlingford" (MM ch. 2, 36). Beginning with the homely details of menus and housekeeping, Lucilla eventually brings her reform efforts to bear on the exclusively male and extravagantly appetitive nature of her father's periodic dinner parties with his peers, and begins the erasure of the gendered boundaries which exclude women from such traditional male strongholds as "the masculine culture centred on the institutions of leisure" (Rendall, Introduction 24). In Judith Newton's words, Lucilla is no longer willing to "define the outside to these insiders" (8), but desires a determining place within. No longer will these spontaneous meals be "enough to drive any woman to despair" with their "regardless and unprincipled" catering to male tastes (MM ch. 2, 34). Under Lucilla's reign, ordered "'Evenings'" are to take the place of such "vulgar festivit[ies]" as "'parties'" of any type (MM ch. 6, 70-71). Although the intent of this cultivated and cultivating reform seems social, contemporary philosophy held "its origin [to be] in the love of perfection; it is a study of perfection. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge [about the augmentation of human excellence], but also of the moral and social passion for doing good" (Arnold 45).

The execution of this reforming labour in the drawing room, which Lucilla has re-papered in "a delicious damask, softly spiritually, green" (MM ch. 7, 75) so that the room, like a dress, might show her to her best advantage, both constitutes a domestic labour and makes such industriousness indistinguishable from the genteel socializing that is a mark of Lucilla's class as well as her fulfillment of her 'natural' function as a woman. She is establishing her home as the domestic centre of the Victorian period's "new urban gentry made up of professional families" (Peterson 2). This step further erodes the mutual exclusivity of the spheres of work and of home without challenging the domestic ideology that underwrites Lucilla's organizational authority in the territory she has claimed by right, a fact that she complacently conveys to her father: "'[A] lady has to spend her life in the drawing-room--and then I always was so domestic'" (MM ch. 6, 65).

Wallpaper alone is insufficient material with which to create an effective domestic workplace. People, too, become instrumental to this purpose: "[S]he knew by instinct what sort of clay the people were made of by whom she had to work, and gave them their reward with that liberality and discrimination which is the glory of enlightened despotism" (MM ch. 5, 51). Leonore Davidoff proposes that, as the domestic organizers of the emergent urban hierarchy, women policed the boundaries of the social and professional network through which economic and political influence, as well as the more obvious forms of social power, circulated and determined individual placement both within the network and the hierarchy (The Best Circles 41-46). Two of the human "instruments that came to her hand" for her "great work" of transforming Carlingford society "from chaos into order and harmony" are Barbara and Rose Lake, working-class members of a family of artists, whose lives are irrevocably changed by Lucilla's domestic discrimination (MM ch. 2, 39; ch. 3, 43; ch. 4, 44).

Barbara Lake is introduced into the narrative as "a piece of good fortune" that occurs on Lucilla's first "reconnaissance" of Carlingford's strategic potential for "her career," an addition to Lucilla's advantageous setting discovered on "the plebeian side" of town (MM ch. 4, 53). Barbara's "round, full, delicious contralto" is intended to "supplement without supplanting" Lucilla's own "high-pitched and much-cultivated" voice during the accomplishment-display portion of the "Thursdays" at the Marjoribanks (MM ch. 4, 54). Although Rose Lake feels that "the true strength of [their] position . . . [as] a family of artists" is that they "are everybody's equal, and . . . nobody's equal[; they] have a rank of their own" (MM ch. 11, 117), Lucilla assures Barbara that her access to these genteel domestic gatherings is possible only because she is not a professional artist:

> 'My dear, a professional singer spoils everything,' said Miss Marjoribanks; 'it changes the character of an evening altogether. . . . When you have professional singers, you have to give yourself up to music; and that is not my view in the least. My great aim, as all my friends are aware, is to be a comfort to dear papa.'
> (MM ch. 5, 56)

Clearly, a professional singer is as admissable to the upper echelons of society as an amateur is (at least on a visiting basis), but a professional draws attention to her talents as an instrument of her livelihood. An amateur, in contrast, (even one of professional calibre) supports the illusion of feminine self-abnegation. According to the criterion

Oliphant establishes for an identifying affiliation with the moral middle-class world of Lucilla, then, Barbara's entrance into the genteel company can only become appropriately and personally beneficial if she willingly/selflessly surrenders her ability to the service of another's well-being. June Sturrock claims that such a portrayal of the relationship between feminine social presence and moral utility partakes of "conventional concepts of gender" that did not "threaten the status quo" but did acknowledge the capacity "and the yearning of many middle-class women for a vocation," with 'vocation' here being distinguished from work taken up under the highly suspect motivation of 'mere' economic gain (30-33).

Although Barbara insists that she only sings informally, the narrator links her talent to her personal ambitions for upward mobility through marriage:

> In half an hour [after Lucilla invited Barbara to sing duets with her at her Evenings, Barbara's] dreams had gone so far that she saw herself receiving in Miss Marjoribanks's drawing-room the homage, not only of Grange Lane, but even of the county families, who would be attracted by rumours of her wonderful performance; and Barbara was, to her own consciousness, walking up the middle aisle of Carlingford Church in a veil of real Brussels . . . To be sure, she had not concluded who was to be the bridegroom; but that was one of those matters of detail which could not be precisely concluded on till the time. (MM ch. 5, 59)

In spite of Barbara's disclaimers, it is apparent that the young woman is a self-serving professional at heart--the narrator compares her to "a young soldier of fortune" (MM ch. 5, 58-59)--when she continues to sing, solo, after Lucilla's impeccable instincts for decorous restraint have stipulated an end to the sensual treat provided by their duets:

> Far from being sensibly silent, which [Barbara] had been so prudent as to be on Miss Marjoribanks's first Thursday, she forgot herself so far as to occupy a great deal of Mr. Cavendish's valuable time, which he might have employed much more usefully. She not only sang by herself when he asked her, having brought some music with her unseen by Lucilla, but she kept her seat upon the stool before the piano ever so long afterwards, detaining him, and, as Miss Marjoribanks had very little doubt, making an exhibition of herself. (MM ch. 12, 120)

By describing the disguised competition between the two women for Cavendish's attention, this passage suggests the similarity between the operations of the economic market and the Victorian marriage market. Oliphant does not really condemn such a comparison. It is, in fact, one that she must implicitly support, given her contention in SC that domestic labour is a form of economic labour. What she does clearly disapprove of is Barbara's market practices. Barbara is not advertising her capacity to work selflessly, but displaying her sexual embodiment, or her 'self-full-ness.' For this reason, her singing becomes "a process of seduction" by which means Barbara hopes to realize "dreams of the wildest and most magnificent character--of riding in her carriage, . . . of dressing as nobody else dressed in Carlingford, and becoming the great lady of the town, and eclipsing utterly Lucilla Marjoribanks" (MM ch. 13, 128-

129). She sings so that she may obtain social symbols of worth that are not representative of her real status. Implicit in this construction of Barbara is the idea that if she will not restrict her singing to its proper service, then she will not be likely to restrict her sexuality either; if she displays a professional self-interest in one area, then she is likely capable of professionalism in the other as well. This syllogistic relationship undermines her presumed possession of a "'natural' [feminine] morality" (Poovey 14). Her "intense force of self-regard" reveals the true nature of "what she called [her] heart:" "a vital centre of inclinations and passions . . . which belongs to some of the lower organisations" (MM ch. 13, 128). Barbara is merely a self-serving pretender to the reform project that Lucilla proposes (Rose observes that her sister does "'not mind being of no use in the world'" [MM ch. 17,165]) and to the class that begins to respond to her transgressive passions with imputations against her morality. She becomes the "insidious enemy whom Miss Marjoribanks had been nourishing in her bosom" (MM ch. 14, 134).

Lucilla is the only member of the company who does not immediately participate in the ostracism of Barbara. To her, Barbara is not a worthy opponent, only a useful contrast to her own "high-pitched and much-cultivated" presence (MM ch. 4, 54). In the face of Cavendish's public defection to Barbara's side, Lucilla regrets that "the two culprits . . . showed themselves so lost to all sense of propriety," but admonishes Cavendish only for allowing the singer to remain in a draught: "'What can you be thinking of to let her stand so near the window? If she were to catch cold and lose her voice, what should we all do?'" (MM ch. 14, 135). Instead of realizing a gain in social status and its material symbols, Barbara's self-service causes her to lose all substance in the decorous gathering. Her "decisions [are] based on self-interest and the profit motive" and undermine the communal stability guaranteed by "the personal relations of the domestic economy" (Rendall, "'A Moral Engine'" 131). That is, she is no longer conducive to the production of social harmony and moral order; she is now only the anomalous voice of a lower order of beings who "strike at the roots of all society" (MM ch. 3, 41). In keeping with her loss of presence in Lucilla's domestic mission, Barbara disappears for ten years from the community into the "'faded existence'" of a governess, a group whose indeterminable identity represents "'a great social problem'" (MM ch. 22, 209).

As did her disappearance from the narrative, Barbara's reappearance coincides with Cavendish's. Significantly, the former suitor had left because of his near-exposure as a pretender to that upper-class identity which had made him such a desirable presence at Lucilla's Thursdays. He is the first to see Barbara in her "peculiar kind of faded silk gown which looks and rustles like tin, or some other thin metallic substance" (MM ch. 47, 442). All vestiges of respectability are absent from her appearance, and her dress's tawdry pretensions to quality emphasize Barbara's continuing inability to distinguish apparent worth from authentic value:

> Barbara Lake herself, who did not know what people were saying [about her being 'that sort' of woman who had aspirations improper to her social standing], and who, if she had known, would not have cared, came to church, as was natural, in the morning; and under pretence that the family pew was full, had the assurance, as people remarked to come to the middle aisle, in that same silk dress which rustled like tin, and made more demonstration than the richest draperies.
> (MM ch. 48, 450)

This passage also recalls the fantasy of social mobility that motivated Barbara's much earlier compliance with Lucilla's request to sing. The tinny silk that she wears during this "walk up the middle aisle of Carlingford Church" contrasts sharply with the "veil of real Brussels" that she once hoped would be the reward of her "wonderful [vocal] performance" (MM ch. 5, 59). It soon becomes evident, however, that the singer has not yet learned to subordinate her abilities to the interests of communal harmony. Because she does not "deny herself the use of her advantages, or omit to 'take the second' in all the canticles with such melodious liquid tones as made everybody stop and look round," we can understand that it is a very moral harmony indeed that she continues to disrupt with her inappropriate self-promotion (MM ch. 48, 451).

Barbara's unwillingness to use her talents selflessly in the service of others not only continues to obstruct her justified possession of a position of value within the social hierarchy of Carlingford, but also apparently prevents Cavendish from obtaining the political position he aspires to. At the very moment that Cavendish publicly acknowledges Barbara's presence and support ("He took off his hat before everybody; probably, . . . he would have gone and offered her his arm had he been near enough"), the narrative reveals that "[t]he [election] tide had turned. Whether it was Barbara, or whether it was fate, . . . [h]ow could anybody wonder, after that, that things had gone against him, and that, notwithstanding all his advantages, he was the loser in the fight?" (MM ch. 48, 459). Desire for a woman in a particularly low position in the social and moral hierarchy places a "check" on the value of the identity that Cavendish may derive from his electoral competition with Ashburton (Poovey 115). Oliphant goes on to suggest that this polled exclusion by the majority at the level of municipal society reflects a national intolerance for self-serving pretensions to authentic worth when Cavendish speculates about taking Barbara with him into a kind of exile:

> [A]s [Cavendish] walked he could not help thinking that Barbara, if she were well dressed would still be a fine woman, that her voice was magnificent in its way, and that about Naples, perhaps, or the

> baths of Lucca, or in Germany, or the south of France, a man might be able to get on well enough with such a companion, where society was not so exacting or stiff-starched as in England.
> (MM ch. 49, 464)

As we will see in the discussion of Rose Lake's characterization, society is not rejecting the fact of Barbara's professionalism itself but the lack of authentic femininity in its motivating principles. That is, Barbara does not go out to work because she has to (to promote the comfort and well-being of others), but only because she wishes to exert her ambitious will upon her own identity. For this reason, she is likely to realize contemporary worries about the governess as a "conduit through which [morally suspect] working class habits would infiltrate the middle-class home" (Poovey 129). Rose, too, is a professional artist, but never does she lose the aura of authentic morality that clings to those women who are wholly committed to service and self-abnegation.

From her childhood, Rose Lake had wanted to become an artist. To this end she was educated, at first, in her father's School of Design. Barbara's malevolent anger over her own frustrated social ambitions ("poor Mrs. Lake thought fit to die, to the injury of her daughter's prospects and the destruction of her hopes" for social connections in Grange Lane) caused her to become "resolute about sending Rose to Mount Pleasant, though the poor little girl did not in the least want to go, and was very happy helping her papa at the School of Design" (MM ch. 5, 57-58). In contrast to Barbara's utilitarian view of her talents, Rose has "a wonderful amount of feeling for art" and sees her artistic ability as a means of working for others (MM ch. 2, 40). For example, though Lucilla sees that Rose is "entirely out of [her] way, and could never count for anything in her designs for the future[,] . . . [Rose] volunteered to work [Lucilla's personalized] design in [a] cambric" handkerchief (MM ch. 2, 39-40). Although Rose was admitted to Mount Pleasant on the recommendation of Dr. Marjoribanks, she "heard the little children their geography and reading, and gave them little lessons in drawing, by way of paying for her own education" (MM ch. 2, 39). It is this sense of vocation (which makes artistic work valuable to Rose for its own sake and only marginally more so when appreciated by others) and open professionalism which makes Rose "'a good little thing, but . . . different, you know'" and entirely unsuited to Lucilla's vision of her reform project. Rose's talents represent a form of private accomplishment that does not translate easily into the social discourse by which Lucilla hopes to reconfigure social chaos into harmony and order (MM ch. 5, 57).

In the case of Rose, however, Lucilla's instinct for instruments of reform utility fail her. The narrator reveals that, self-sufficient appearances aside, Rose is dependent on the well-being of others for her own happiness.

She is an essentially domestic young woman, even in her work:

> Rose had made such progress, after leaving Mount Pleasant, under her father's care, and by the help of that fine feeling for art[,] . . . that the charge of the female pupils in the School of Design had been confided to her, with a tiny little salary, which served Mr. Lake as an excuse for keeping his favorite little daughter with him. Nothing could be supposed more unlike Barbara than her younger sister, who . . . was twice as serviceable and active and 'nice' according to the testimony of all the children. Barbara had led her father a hard life, poor man! the time that Rose was at Mount Pleasant; but now that his assistant had come back again, the poor drawing-master had recovered all his old spirits.
> (MM ch. 11, 115)

From the outset of the novel Rose embodies both selflessness and morality. Her professional position is as an assistant and she is defined by the relationship that it puts her in with respect to both her father and the children she teaches. In keeping with Poovey's contention that this "proudly claimed . . . supportive, subordinate" position neutralizes the implicit threat that the professional independent woman represented to her society (166), Rose is portrayed as both an economic and an emotional supporter of the domesticity that has produced her. In her capacity as an institutionalized educator, she is also a centralized and centralizing disseminator of middle-class "domesticity . . . as the norm . . . in the reproduction of England's national (domestic) character" (Poovey 160-62). Appropriately, then, Rose sees her occupation as an opportunity to re-create in the young women she governs not only her own appreciation for art, but also her own perception of the inherent value of working at something possessing real cultural significance. The impulse to create and re-create through service originates in what the narrator refers to as the "feeling for art" that Rose despairs of being able to instill in the "poorer classes of the community" (MM ch.11, 115). Clearly, this construction suggests it as a middle-class impulse. To Rose, it also allows for the expression of connective meanings between personal and social symbols:

> [Rose] had been amusing herself as she waited [for Barbara] by working at a corner of that design which was to win the prize on a later occasion. . . . Instead of losing herself in vague garlands of impossible flowers, the young artist clung with the tenacity of first love to the thistle leaf, which had been the foundation of her early triumph [with Lucilla's handkerchief]. Her mind was full of it even while she received and listened to Barbara; whether to treat it in a national point of view, bringing in the rose and Shamrock, which was a perfectly allowable proceeding, though perhaps not original--or whether she should yield to the 'sweet feeling' which had been so conspicuous in her flounce, in the opinion of the Marlborough House gentlemen--or whether, on the contrary, she should handle the subject in a boldly naturalistic way, and use her spike with freedom. . . . [A]ll the more difficult [a decision], perhaps, considering the nature of the subject, since the design in this case was not for a flounce, in which broad handling is practicable, but for a veil. (MM ch. 14, 139)

Rose labours for her amusement at creating a decorative and meaningful barrier between the world and the unspecified face of her sex. She proposes to block the public gaze with the symbol-laden product of her work. These symbols refer specifically either to Lucilla with her instinct for social organization, or to her own vocational instinct. Alternately, they could simply reflect back to the watcher the national "point of view." This work, then, materially represents the connection between female industry, feminine self-effacement, and the decorous self-containment that is the mark of the truly moral (and truly middle- or upper-class) woman (Poovey 161). It is also an endeavour that Rose feels transcends the public hierarchy of worth arbitrated by social class. To her, public honour both accrues to her private existence (the labouring self hidden behind the eventual public fact of the veil) from the selfless nature of the work itself and depends upon a perceptible ethical consistency between the two sites of identity:

> Rose Lake sought [Lucilla] with [a] confession [about Barbara's clandestine meetings with Cavendish] . . . Rose was proud, poor little soul, not only of her exceptional position, and that of her family, as a family of artists, but also with a constitutional and individual pride as one of the natural conservators of domestic honour.
> (MM ch. 26, 248)

For Rose, publicly worked symbols (here, those conveyed by Barbara's comportment) both hide and represent a private reality of moral character (a domestic product). The narrator supports this determination by asserting that, in spite of 'society's' perception of the "'artist kind of people . . . [as] all adventurers'" (MM ch. 18, 175), Rose "was a little gentlewoman born" (MM ch. 11, 117) "whose rank protected her like an invisible buckler" from being contaminated by association with her sister's professional self-service (MM ch. 17, 163). Although Oliphant is clearly using class as if it were a transparent signifier of inherent individual worth in MM, she is also suggesting that feminine labour operates freely as an independent moral determinant within that signifying field to identify the worker at a social level commensurate with her authentic morality. As Scott notes, "[w]hat [women] did was less important than what they stood for" (109) and Rose symbolizes all that is culturally valued about both women and their productive activity.

When Cavendish leaves Carlingford for Italy, Barbara responds by "going out for a governess," a gesture of self-sufficiency that Lucilla sees as "'selfish,'" but that Rose perceives as an extreme and uncontrolled (if understandable) reaction to "'a broken heart'": "'She cannot be expected to stay and sacrifice herself for us [the family], after all she has suffered'" (MM ch. 35, 333). The consequence of Barbara's abandonment (both emotional and familial) is the end of Rose's "Career" at the School of Design,

> 'because there is nobody else to do anything . . . Fleda and Dreda are such two little things; and there are all the boys to think of, and poor papa. If I don't do it [act the mother], there will be nobody to do it,' said Rose . . . Her Career was dear to her heart . . . but then there would be nobody else to do it--a consideration which continually filters out the people who are good for anything out of the muddy current of the ordinary world. (MM ch. 35, 336)

By willingly containing her labours to the domestic arena and sacrificing the material and publicly negotiable reward for her former service (her "tiny little salary" [MM ch. 1, 115]), Rose re-configures herself as a kind of domestic "martyr and heroic victim to duty" (MM ch. 35, 336). She maintains her status as a fully-realized moral woman, in spite of the despair and the unease with which she faces what her culture sees as "a particularly valuable and valued form of labour" for woman (Poovey 115).

Oliphant's representation of the emotional impact of this necessity is singular in Victorian literature. She does not suggest that Rose retires from her public vocation happily or with any sense that she is taking up her domestic duties as a reward for moral services rendered elsewhere. Instead, Oliphant suggests that, as a domestic labourer whose efforts and much broader capacities are restricted to the home and hearth, Rose's abilities both to transcend social categories by virtue of her industrious honour and to disseminate her worthy feelings by means of her social exposure are utterly neutralized.

The next time Rose appears in the narrative, she no longer possesses a rank somewhat "protected . . . from . . . class-based distinctions [by her artistic talents]" (Sanderson 213), but identifies herself solely as one of "the poor people [who] do want" the "moral influence" available to someone with the capacity to "teach them and their children, and look after them, and be their mother"

(MM ch. 46, 433-34). She now looks for the guidance, the "superintendence of morality," that is putatively rendered by the idealized middle class (Poovey 162). For its part, society now associates her with the immorality of her sister, suggesting, perhaps, that Rose's willing abdication from her vocation to take up a required and moral, but unloved, task makes her vulnerable to 'merely social' categories of identity because she no longer has access to a labour that expresses her 'authentic self.' With the complete separation of spheres that formerly overlapped, her only available expressions of domesticity are still very valuable and highly moral, but they are now limited in their range of influence (Thompson 79). That is, Rose's labours still speak of domesticity (and, thus, of moral femininity), but can only speak it very quietly.

In contrast to the circumscription within the private sphere that Rose experiences, Lucilla suddenly finds herself, upon her father's death, at alarmingly loose ends, but headed in the same limited direction: "What would Lucilla do? Would she have strength to 'make an effort,' . . . or would she feel not only her grief, but her downfall, and that she was only a single woman, and sink into a private life?" (MM ch. 43, 404). Lucilla's "very active mind and great energies" cause "an involuntary stir and hustle of plans and projects . . . so strangely free and new and unlimited as [her new position] seemed" (MM ch. 43, 405), but she knows that her "active and practical" enactment of the principles of political economy, the appropriately feminine mission which gave her access to the public struggle for authority over social reproduction, is curtailed by the script for female comportment from which she derives her legitimacy (Newton 8). Although she is restricted from continuing her direct participation in the local election, she remains actively interested and observant from the domestic margins. Unlike Rose, who collapsed her identity into this deactivated position, Lucilla "did not feel as if she were Lucilla" on the sidelines:

> The hustings were erected at . . . the most central point in Carlingford. It was so near that Lucilla could hear the shouts and the music and all the divers noises of the election, but could not, even when she went into the very corner of the window and strained her eyes to the utmost, see what was going on which was a very trying position. (MM ch. 48, 455)

Lacking an identifiable object for her domestic world, Lucilla cannot autonomously establish a working/identifying relationship with anyone: "All that gave importance to the centre of society--the hospitable table, the open house--had come to an end with the Doctor" (MM ch. 43, 405). Not only has Lucilla lost the ostensible object of her labours, she also has lost the means. Her father left her with only a very modest income. As Poovey says is true of Agnes in David Copperfield, however, she possesses "the dowry of her middle-class virtue and efficient housekeeping skills," a comment that makes the market value (or public substance) of such skills explicit (99). With this "'natural capital'" to her credit, then, Lucilla can invest in the "working partnership" that many contemporary marriages were (Rendall, "'A Moral Engine'" 123-24). When cousin Tom Marjoribanks suddenly reappears on the scene with his offer of marriage, Lucilla rejoices over her opportunity to administer "a larger sphere" of beneficial influence (MM ch. 52, 497) than the one in which she has "'slaved like a . . . woman in a mill'" (MM ch. 51, 485) because such an advance is an implicit recognition of her seniority in the proposed partnership.

Since the estate that Lucilla directs Tom to buy is one that historically belonged to the family (but was lost through financial mismanagement), Lucilla's vow--to not only reclaim Marchbanks and "'make it pay,'" but also to set "all the disorder and disarray of Marchbank village . . . on a sound foundation"--completely "justifie[s] her choice of Tom, which, but for this chance of doing good, might perhaps have had the air of merely selfish personal preference" and performs a corrective operation on the incompetent and inadequate labours of her male predecessors (MM ch. 51, 486, 488). In addition to this ambition for herself, Lucilla decides that Tom, whose "genius" lies in ably "carrying out a suggestion," might well become a Member of Parliament for the county in which her future home is located:

> Then there rose up before her a vision of a parish saved, a county reorganised, and a triumphant election at the end, the recompense and crown of all, which should put the government of the country itself, to a certain extent, into competent hands. This was the celestial vision which floated before Miss Marjoribank's eyes as she drove into Carlingford, and recollected, notwithstanding occasional moments of discouragement, the successful work she had done, and the good she had achieved in her native town. It was but the natural culmination of her career that transferred her from the town to the county, and held out to her the glorious task of serving her generation in a twofold way, among the poor and among the rich. (MM ch. 52, 496-97)

The reward for Lucilla's mission of service to her community through the provision of comfort for her father is clearly not the marriage to Tom itself, but the opportunity the union affords Lucilla to engage in labour within a nationalized domestic domain. This climax of labour is the full realization of Lucilla's authentic identity ("'after all, [she] shall never be anything but Lucilla Marjoribanks'" [MM ch. 52, 498]), a "due occupation" which will allow her to use the instinctual powers that she "had become conscious . . . were greater than her work" in Carlingford (MM ch. 42, 395). As Lucilla complacently notes, "there is little good in the existence of Power unless it can be made use of for some worthy end" (MM ch. 42, 395). The ambiguity of Oliphant's use of the word 'power,' here, which may refer either to authority or ability, implies that Lucilla displays both attributes in the administration of her household and suggests that she (and, by implication, those women like her) is morally obligated to reproduce that efficient site of reform in such a way and at such a place that as many as possible may benefit from it. All she was lacking in Carlingford was a large enough object to serve. Oliphant's "explor[ation in MM of] the parameters of social status and reproduction" (Blake 102) reveals that, in moving from the service of municipal interests to those on a national scale, Lucilla has found both the work "she might have gone into . . . had there been no disqualification of sex" (MM ch. 42, 394) and the means whereby she may reproduce her domestic workplace (as well as demonstrate the importance of women to the relations within it) at a national level (Poovey 190).

## Chapter Four
## Woman's Work and Economic Value

In Phoebe, Junior, The Last Chronicle of Carlingford (1876), the degree to which work defines the relationship of a woman to others determines the degree to which she may be seen as an authentically moral being. As in Oliphant's other Carlingford novels, this means of measuring and evaluating both womanhood and morality operates within and across all spheres of existence, from the private/domestic/feminine to the public/political/masculine, and spans all the permutations possible between those cultural polarities. Plot, in PJ, is subordinate to Oliphant's analysis of society and its labour-, sex-, and class-based assumptions about moral character. She effects these examinations through the gradual revelation of the social significance of the authentically moral and feminine identities developed by two female characters--Ursula May and Phoebe Beecham--who, at the outset, are defined according to traditional class and sphere criterion, but who come to signify very different cultural operations and spheres of influence although their moral identities remain almost identical.

At the beginning of PJ, Ursula May is introduced as the "poor relation on the late Lady Dorset's side" who is enjoying a short vacation with her aristocratic relatives (vol. 1, ch. 4, 73). She is

> the daughter of a poor clergyman in the little

> town of Carlingford, a widower with a large family. Ursula was the eldest daughter, with the duties of a mother on her much burdened hands; and she had no special inclination towards these duties, so that a week's escape from them was a relief to her at any time. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 4, 73)

The narrative also reveals that "[s]he was not anxious about how things might be going on [at home] in her absence" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 4, 85). Although at least part of Ursula's disinterest in the well-being of her siblings during her holiday springs from her lack of "special inclination" (or vocational calling) for the duties of motherhood, another part stems from her inability to establish a genteel domesticity "'in that dreadful Parsonage, among all those children whom she does not know how to manage'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 4, 78). Because of this ignorance, which Ursula's generous cousins chalk up to her being a "'poor little innocent girl'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 8, 150) who does not understand the moral identity ("'the consequence'") women derive from proving "'the good of [themselves]'" by raising children in an orderly fashion (PJ vol. 1, ch. 8, 158-59), Ursula looks elsewhere for a source of worthwhile identity: "What if somewhere about, in some beautiful house, with . . . a carriage at the door, a beautiful young hero should be waiting who would give all these dazzling delights [of material and social acquisition] to Ursula?" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 7, 140). Throughout the "not . . . very elevated or heroic dream" of this young woman about her possible future, Ursula hopes "to marry a rich man, to be able to buy presents for everyone, to make the children at home perfectly happy without any trouble to oneself" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 7, 142, 139). Her ambitions for personal worth clearly specify only the material realm of class and property and she sees the success of the domestic realm as entirely dependent on these arbitrary (and externally-controlled) social factors. Maureen Mackintosh indicates that such a view is opposed to the capitalist reality that had been established in England by the rise of industrialism and the middle class: "the household, in capitalist society[,] . . . is an economic institution, because it is rooted in the production of domestic labour" (189). Although Ursula's intellectual cousin, Sophy Dorset, believes with Ursula that "'girls must marry if they are to be of any consequence in the world'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 4, 78-79), the narrative reveals the presence of Victorian economic relations embedded in the rhetoric of moral domestic relations by implying that the women's view reflects a shortfall in their feminine nature: "Sophy was different [in the "very yearning of nature"]. Sophy wanted material for happiness--something to make her glad; she did not possess it . . . in the quiet of her heart" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 8, 163).

Although a love of and dedication to children seem to operate, in this early part of PJ, as signs of female worthiness, good cousin Anne Dorset points out that children merely provide an opportunity for a woman to "do" for others selflessly (express what should be "in the quiet of her heart") and thus justify her feminine existence:

> '[Children] are brought to you when they need you, and taken from you when they need you no longer,' said Sophy, indignantly, 'you are left to bear the trouble--others have the recompense.'
>
> 'It is so in this world, my dear, all the way down, from God himself. Always looking for reward is mean and mercenary. When we do nothing, when we are of no use, what a poor thing life is,' said Anne[,] . . . 'not worth having. I think we have only a right to our existence when we are doing something. And I have my wages; I like to be of a little consequence . . . Nobody is of any consequence who does not do something.'
>
> 'In that case, the ayah, the housemaid is of more consequence than you.'
>
> 'So be it--I don't object,' said Anne, 'but I don't think so, for they have to be directed and guided. To be without a housemaid is dreadful. The moment you think of that, you see how important the people who work are; everything comes to a standstill without [them], whereas there are ladies whose absence would make no difference.' (vol. 1, ch. 8, 159-60)

According to Anne's ethical philosophy, implicitly supported in the novel through Anne's construction as an ideal model of womanhood, voluntary work provides the relationship in which women may be understood to be closest to God. This construction also suggests that labour for others confers the only moral authority and influence for which women may rightfully hope. They are the "wages" of virtue or the "economic content" of woman's subordination to the needs of others (Mackintosh 189). When that inherent authority is eventually translated into a 'real' gain in social and/or economic status, then the independent operation of a divine justice that refers to labour as evidence of worth may be understood to be responsible. This is the lesson that Ursula must learn before she can hope to become an authentically moral woman and truly "'merit'" the social recognition that comes with marriage, rank, and wealth (PJ vol. 1, ch. 4, 75).

When Ursula returns to the parsonage, "ten days of Anne Dorset's orderly reign had opened [her] eyes to [the] imperfections" of her own domestic management (PJ vol. 1, ch. 9, 197), if not to the inherent moral value of the work itself:

> Ursula had not learnt much about public virtue, and to get a good income for doing nothing, or next to nothing, seemed to her an ideal sort of way of getting one's livelihood. She wished with a sigh that there were sinecures which could be held by girls. But no, in that as in other things 'gentlemen' kept all that was good to themselves; and Ursula was disposed to treat [her brother] Reginald's scruples [about accepting an apparently figurehead position at a local retirement home for elderly clerics] with a very high hand. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 10, 203)

Her father feels that his daughter's desire for a manifest reward (instead of the implicit one currently rendered by the male head of a household through his material support of individuals "'all taking from [him], with a thousand wants, education, clothes, amusements . . . one more helpless than the other'" [PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 299-300]) is just one more sign of society "'getting into an unnatural state'" in which "'the girls are mad to earn anyhow'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 10, 197). Although May clearly sees his daughter as occupying a type of domestic sinecure in which value tendered overmatches value received, he is also tacitly acknowledging the truth of Rendall's observation that domestic labour had begun by this point in the Victorian period (1876) to acquire "a monetary as well as a moral value" ("'A Moral Engine'" 124). Unfortunately, Ursula is not educated sufficiently to take up any other occupation and lacks the training for the legitimated domestic authority enjoyed by such women as Lucilla Marjoribanks (Barrett 167):

> Ursula had got what little education she possessed in the same irregular way [as her younger sister Janey]. . . . It was not much. Besides reading and writing [Ursula] had pretty manners, which came by nature like those other gifts. A girl is not badly off who can read and write and has pretty manners. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 294-95)

The limited (and casual) education of the girls reflects the ideology of genteel idleness that their apparent rank might lead them to expect as their lot. It is entirely inadequate for the needy reality of shabby gentility within a house that has become, of necessity, a site of economic production. May's awareness of these facts is clear in his remonstrances to Ursula when Clarence Copperhead (May's paying pupil) comes to live with them:

> "'Well, perhaps it is a great deal to expect at your age; but if you read your cookery-book, as I have often said, when you were reading those novels, and learned how to toss up little dishes out of nothing, and make entrees, and so forth, at next to no expense--. . . It is management that is wanted. . . . If you wanted really to help us [the family], and improve my position, you might [learn].' (PJ vol. 2, ch. 13, 252-53)

With the aim of taking "an independent and self-defined path to [a] useful and satisfactory [life] without breaking away from . . . the norms of [genteel] life" (Peterson 145), Ursula undertakes a crash course in the feminine "'business'" of household economy, a discipline she is moderately acquainted with already from having "'to go to the tradespeople and to bear it if they grumble'" over her father's habitual non-payment of bills (PJ vol. 2, ch. 13, 253). Eventually, she comes "to share her father's opinion, that dinner was the right and dignified thing . . . and that they had hitherto been living in a very higgeldy-piggeldy way" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 273). In response to this decidedly middle-class impulse, Ursula dedicates her labour and her appearance to the establishment and promotion of domestic order, honour, and economic increase. She "turned [the household] upside down, to make it look more modern, more elegant" and "scorched her cheeks over the entrees" in the kitchen (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 271-72). Because part of this laborious re-organization of the Mays' private world includes pushing aside the "comfortable round table [which had been] in the middle" of the drawing room (and at which Ursula and Janey usually sat to do the family's mending), Ursula can be understood as voluntarily marginalizing her domestic labour to serve the more important social and financial needs of her family (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 272). Implicit in this construction of Ursula's endeavour is Oliphant's comprehension that "domestic labour . . . [is in a direct] relation to the creation of [economic] value" (Mackintosh 174) and that, by undertaking such labour, women occupy a determining position in the production of the family's social identity. May's only response to Ursula's efforts emphasizes the amateur calibre of her early domestic product:

> 'Tell your cook she shall go if she sends up such uneatable stuff again, Ursula,' her father cried from the other end of the table.
>
> Two big tears dashed up hot and scalding into Ursula's eyes. Oh, how she wished she could be dismissed like Betsy! (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 280)

According to Sylvia Walby's "Historical Periodisation of Patriarchy," such a wish for a wage-earning identity was symptomatic of, and immediately preceded, Victorian women's "claims to the rights and privileges of citizenship" (151). Having taken herself in hand and laboriously organized her world, Ursula has become one of "'the people who work'" and without whom "'everything comes to a standstill'" in a way that they did not during her holiday with the Dorsets (PJ vol. 1, ch. 8, 160). May, however, in his capacity as family patriarch, "mediate[s] the relations between capital and labour " (Mark-Lawson 126) and withholds the "'wages'" which are now her due by merely remarking upon how expendable she is (i.e. upon how little "'consequence'" she is to the household) (PJ vol. 1, ch. 8, 159). His unwillingness to appreciate the value of his daughter's labour to the economic and social status of the household represents his exploitation of Ursula, his intention to alienate her from the domestic product that has been traditionally regarded as the inalienable expression of her morally enfranchised self (Mackintosh 188), and his self-interested appropriation of the value she produces.

Carol Dyhouse notes that such a lack of recognition for the value of domestic production constructed women in the Victorian period as parasites whose perceived "[p]roduction for use rather than for market" was the "root cause of their oppression in [and exclusion from] public life" (65-67). It would seem that Oliphant, at some level and to some degree, agreed in principle with this assessment because, although May appears to escape all consequences for his injustice toward his daughter's identifying labour, he is later judged to be a criminal when he performs a similarly-constructed appropriation of funds that represent the personal and social identity of Tozer (who May regards, as he does Ursula, as his natural inferior). Not only is Oliphant refuting the perception of parasitism that denied the 'real' value of woman's domestic labour when she points out Ursula's contributory role to the family's accumulation of capital (and, thus, to its social status), but she is also commenting obliquely on the fact that traditional social criteria for individual worth--class, as well as the male possession and exchange of property, including women and their labour--disguised and vindicated the unjust exclusion of those in inferior positions within the hierarchy from the full citizenship to which the inherent value of their labour morally entitled them (Poovey 76). To Oliphant, this civil right of being was not connected, at least at this early date, to the vote, but to the appropriate valuing of the individual according to the moral utility of his or her self-determined (i.e. labour-determined) identity. May, in this instance, is unable to discern the dehumanizing disenfranchisement he enacts upon his daughter with his devaluing of her efforts.

Because it is at this juncture that Northcote first notices "the little motherless housekeeper crying because her father scolded her in public for a piece of bad cookery" (PJ vol.2, ch. 14, 281), the structure of Oliphant's novel suggests that Northcote does perceive the connection between the public value of Ursula's labour and the individual worth that this value allows her to claim. He desires to erase the alienation that has implicitly compared domestic labour to wage labour (Poovey 77-78). Full of both admiration for the work Ursula has attempted and sympathy for the lack of recognition she has received, he immediately begins to mitigate the authority with which May determines the quality of his daughter's life: "'Get me the paper, Ursula,' [May] said. It would be hard to tell with what feelings Northcote contemplated him. He was the father of Ursula, yet he dared to order her about, to bring tears to her eyes" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 289). Although Phoebe tries to defend male insensitivity--"'gentlemen don't understand often; but we must do our duty'"--Northcote clearly does understand that, in all justice, a better return should be offered for so selfless an effort (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 284). Unconsciously, he renders it, but in terms that re-inscribe her labour in the sentimental narrative of Victorian femininity. For him, the "cheerful house" assumes the character of "a refuge, which gradually became dearer and dearer" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 295). As the domestic spirit of this private realm, Ursula becomes a heroic figure in his mind: "The young Dissenter was as Dante, and simple Ursula, with her housekeeping books in her hand, became another Beatrice" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 296). Although it is "incipient Love" that motivates Northcote's perception of Ursula's newly-developed moral presence, love operates here as a naturalized recognition and response to the "ideal" that the young woman now embodies (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 296). The narrator indicates that this intuitively ascribed and superior measure of worth has nothing to do with reasoned, or 'masculine,' determinations about what is right, but everything to do with subjective, or 'feminine,' justice: "It was not very wise [to make little Ursula into the ideal lady] . . . and yet no doubt there was something in [his folly] that was a great deal better than wisdom" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 298).

The next time that Ursula looks at Northcote through "two big tears," she is once again "doing her natural work for her father," but now it is to be openly done "through [Northcote]--her representative" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 12, 241). By this time, May has proven his unfitness for his position as Ursula's domestic object and superior and can be left out of the consideration about to whom Ursula will rightfully submit herself and her labour: "Oddly enough they could all of them pass by their father and leave him out of the question" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 12, 240). Ursula has finally become 'authentically' moral. That is, she has learned to manage the domestic realm and to recognize the value of that work for and to others. The novel marks this ethical ascension by showing that she will become known publicly for what she now is personally: a thoroughly genteel administrator with appropriate powers of influence over the man she serves. Structurally, PJ also suggests that this realization of moral feminine self coincides with the production of surplus value or economic gain. As her cynical cousin Sophy points out, she will now "'manage to be happy'" in her life with Northcote (PJ vol. 3, ch. 16, 322) who is "infinitely richer, and quite as well born and bred . . . as the Mays" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 10, 199). Such an association marks what Toril Moi sees as a truly feminist intent not to demean the indirect form of power available to women, "but to "[transform] the existing power structures--and in the process, [transform] the very concept of power itself" (148). For Ursula, manifest and implicit wages have become commensurate expressions of her moral femininity or her ability to work selflessly for others. Although "her domestic labour [has been] rhetorically [re-]distinguished from paid labour [and] the illusion . . . that there [are] separate spheres" of work re-established, the structural similarities between the role of woman in domestic relations and the place of the worker in market relations have been made abundantly clear, as has the possibility that women can be alienated "both outside the home and within it--from their economic [and 'natural'] productivity" (Poovey 79-81).

* * * * * * * * *

Oliphant's character Phoebe Beecham closely resembles Lucilla Marjoribanks in the pragmatic light by which she views the world, but is, in the Colbys' view, "softened . . . and humanized into a thoroughly charming and believable character" (67). Unlike Lucilla, however, who "had been brought up in the old-fashioned orthodoxy of having a great respect for religion, and as little to do with it as possible (MM ch. 17, 162), Phoebe's religious affiliation with the Dissenting church almost completely determines her view of the world and her place in it. Originally, Dissent (which traces its principles to the Scottish Enlightenment) defined itself by its opposition, both to mainstream religion and the traditional social stratification which that institutionalized ideology supported. Over the years, however,

> that Nonconformity which has come to be the faith in which a large number of people are trained is a totally different business, and affects very different kinds of sentiment. Personal and independent conviction has no more to do with it than it has to do with the ardour of a Breton peasant trained in the deepest zeal of Romanism, or the unbounded certainty of any other traditionary believer. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 1, 15)

Phoebe's father is a pastor in this conventionalized nonconformity and indoctrinates Phoebe with the tenets of social egalitarianism, the work ethic, and anti-sentimentalism which are the religion's founding principles. Because this sanctified embourgeoisement originally "encouraged . . . the opposition of a lower class towards the higher" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 1, 14), the Dissenting congregations of Oliphant's novel consist primarily of ideologically valorized middle-class families who, by the nineteenth century, had acquired significant economic power, social presence, and moral authority (Hall 18-19). While the philosophy (and theory) of this middle-class group continues to reflect the anti-aristocratic principles of its founders, its practices (and particularly those of Mr. Beecham's Crescent Chapel) had long since begun to blur the excluding differences between itself and the classes above, and to identify itself according to the similarities between it and the upper classes that were once seen as ideologically antithetical, but are now emulated as the "highest social elevation" to which a Dissenter may aspire

(PJ vol. 1, ch. 1, 16). As Catherine Hall points out, "[t]he ideology of the family[, according to which "the bourgeois family was seen as the proper family,"] . . . obscured class relations, for it came to appear above class" (31). Oliphant reveals, however, that this self-perceived transcendence relied almost wholly upon an externally-derived (economic) capacity to sanitize the middle class of contact with its inferiors:

> The pew-holders in the Crescent Chapel were universally well off . . . [T]he atmosphere of the Crescent Chapel was . . . a warm, luxurious, air, perfumy, breathing of that refinement which is possible to mere wealth. I do not say there might not be true refinement besides, but the surface kind, that which you buy from upholsterers and tailors and dressmakers, which you procure ready made at schools, and which can only be kept up at a very high cost, abounded and pervaded the place. Badly dressed people felt themselves out of place in that brilliant sanctuary; a muddy footprint upon the thick matting in the passages was looked at as a crime. . . . And they were . . . what you might safely call well-informed people--people who read the newspapers, and sometimes the magazines, and knew what was going on. The men were almost all liberal in politics, and believed in Mr. Gladstone with enthusiasm; the women often 'took an interest' in public movements, especially of a charitable character. . . . They were indeed somewhat proud of their tolerance, their impartiality, their freedom from old prejudices. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 1, 11-13)

Phoebe, who had "had every advantage in her education," is very much a product of this social, intellectual, and ideological environment:

> She had possessed a German governess all to herself, by which means . . . a certain amount of that philosophy which Germans communicate by their very touch, must have got into her, besides her music and the language which was her primary

> study. And she had attended lectures at the ladies college close by, and heard a great many eminent men on a great many different subjects. She had read, too, a very great deal. She was well got up in the subject of education for women, and lamented often and pathetically the difficulty they lay under of acquiring the highest instruction; but at the same time she patronized Mr. Ruskin's theory that dancing, drawing, and cooking, were three of the higher arts which ought to be studied by girls. (PJ vol. 1, ch.3, 46-47)

The practical aspects of Phoebe's fairly traditional upper-middle-class education will never be used because her father will not let her sit for the academic exams at Cambridge. He worries that

> the connection . . . would imagine he meant to make a school-mistress out of her, which he thanked Providence he had no need to do . . . [a]nd she was not allowed to educate herself in the department of cooking, to which Mrs. Beecham objected, saying likewise, thank Heaven, they had no need of such messings; that she did not have to make a slave of herself, and that Cook would not put up with it. (PJ vol. 1, ch. 3, 48)

Still, Phoebe's "ornamental" arts and accomplishments do have an important place in Phoebe's life at the outset of the narrative (PJ vol. 1, ch. 3, 51). To Phoebe, it is her "'duty to [her parents] and to Providence,'" as well as an economically-significant courtesy, to exercise her own theories "on the point of dress" and look "'very well'" at all social functions, particularly at those over which the host has "'taken a great deal of trouble . . . and a great deal of expense'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 3, 46, 52). This dedication to her own appearance is not, the narrator assures the reader, the same vanity in Phoebe as it may "generally supposed [to be] in a pretty young woman . . . contemplating her own image" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 3, 49). Instead, it is an unsentimental, almost scientific, expression of an intellectualized domestic aesthetic through which a decidedly constructed self may be presented to the public eye or 'society' at its best (i.e. distinguishing) advantage and legitimately claim its right and ability to reproduce itself to the benefit of society. Such an emphasis in Oliphant's writing reveals not only her awareness of "the constructedness of gender", but also the fundamental "mobility of [cultural] signifiers [such as femininity] that allows them to be embedded in different codes" (Ferris 22-24). Here, Phoebe's careful presentation of herself links the domestic world that has produced her with both the social and commercial worlds that will ascribe value and authority to her.

In the Dissenting congregation's conflicted ideological adherence to both plebeian values and the social emulation of aristocratic sensibility, the prevalence of the social display over the moral is clearly evident. Phoebe is a purely social creature whose adoption of the gentry's coloration makes her indistinguishable, to her "decent and respectable" shop-keeper grandfather, from "one of the quality" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 233) when she returns to Carlingford and "homelier circumstances" in order to care for her ill grandmother (PJ vol. 1, ch. 5, 95). Although

Mrs. Beecham fears for her daughter's social sense of herself when she frets "that it might have a bad effect upon Phoebe's principles in every way, should she find out the lowly place held by the connection in such an old-fashioned, self-conceited, Tory town as Carlingford" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 5, 100), Phoebe persuades her parents that, according to the tenets of her culture's domestic ideology, she must go. Her motives, however, are not quite selfless:

> If it was necessary that some one should go to look after her grandmamma, and keep all [the inheritance-hungry,] vulgar [relatives] at bay, and show to the admiring world what a Dissenting minister's daughter could be, and what a dutiful daughter was, then who was so fit as herself to be the example? This gave her even a certain tragical sense of heroism, which was exhilarating, though serious. . . . She was going among barbarians, a set of people who would not understand her, probably, and whom she would have to 'put up with.' (PJ vol. 1, ch. 5, 104-05)

In Phoebe's mind this filial act constitutes both a kind of missionary expedition into a social hinterland and a type of charitable martyrdom by which her "grandmamma" might be comforted and her family's "'rights'" to future economic provision from that humble quarter might be secured (PJ vol. 1, ch. 11, 207). Oliphant exposes Phoebe's response to the needs of her grandparents as a wholly social one in which the self-sacrifice that is usually assumed to motivate such "other"-oriented acts disquietingly disguises mere self-service.

When Phoebe arrives in Carlingford, she discovers that the language of gentility, which she has been educated to articulate by way of her refined accomplishments and person, has little meaning to "her humble relations:" "The first glimpse of old Tozer, indeed, made it quite evident to Phoebe that . . . [p]leasure, friends, society, the thought of all such delights must be abandoned" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 237-38). On the occasion of her first Meeting at Salem Chapel, for instance, Mrs. Tozer instructs Phoebe to "'[g]o . . . and put on something very nice, something as will show a bit'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 2, 20). Although the principle of material self-display is one that Phoebe comprehends and supports, its particular articulation in Carlingford becomes problematic. When Phoebe comes down from her room wearing

> a costume of Venetian blue, one soft tint dying into another like the lustre on a piece of old glass, . . . with puffings of lace . . . at the throat and sleeves . . . [and] wrapt in a shawl . . . of the same dim gorgeous hue, covered with embroidery, an Indian rarity . . . which no one had used or thought of till Phoebe's artistic eye fell on it[,] . . . Mrs. Tozer inspected her . . . with awe, and yet with dissatisfaction.
> (PJ vol. 2, ch. 2, 24-45)

Phoebe's understated elegance does not speak Carlingford's common language of opulent display and her "resplendent" relatives cannot comprehend her quiet claim to gentility: "'A bit of a rag of an old shawl, and a hat on! the same as she wears every day. I've got more respect for them as comes to instruct us than that'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 2, 27). Although the grandparents are proud of Phoebe's ability to play the piano--the one talent Phoebe "rather piqued herself upon," being "learned in Bach, Beethoven [and] . . . Wagner"

(PJ vol. 1, ch. 13, 267)--neither of the Tozers understands the calibre of her accomplishment. In fact, in one of the novel's funniest passages, old Tozer displays what the Colbys call his "vulgar charm both amusing and at times touching" (43) by apologizing to Reginald May for the music's incomprehensibility when the young man, who "after some time . . . began to understand that he was listening to something which he had never heard before [and] . . . which seemed to creep into his heart by his ears[,] . . . got up . . . and stole towards the piano bewildered:" "'It'll soon be over, Sir,' said Tozer, encouragingly. 'Don't you run away, Mr. May. Them are queer tunes, I allow, but they don't last long, and your company's an honour. As for the playing, it'll soon be over; you needn't run away'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 10, 202). To the Tozers, Phoebe is a symbol of wealth whose valued social meaning they comprehend as little as they do that of their "Cream Wedgewood" china, which they consider merely "'[o]ld things'" and "'good enough for every day'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 10, 194, 199). Mrs. Tozer acknowledges this signifying gap when she says, "'She's a deal too fine for us, Tozer . . . She'll never make herself 'appy in our quiet way'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12 242). The grandfather feels, however, that the familial, or personal, link with them will eventually outweigh the "sense of the 'difference' which could not but be felt on one side as well as the other" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 239): "'Well,' said

Tozer[,] . . . 'she ain't proud, not a bit; and as for manners, you don't pay no more for manners. She came up and give me a kiss in the station, as affectionate as possible. All I can say for her is as she ain't proud'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 242-43).

While Phoebe's articulations of class identity are beyond the Tozers, they do understand the language of comportment very well. Because she seems willing to serve them, they view her "with ever-growing pride . . . [as] the ideal young woman, the girl of the story-books, who cared for nothing but her duty" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 14, 254). This assessment of moral worth relies only on surface appearances and operates within the 'trade' community in the same way as the ladies' finery at the Meeting: "Phoebe felt, in addition to all the rest, that she was to be made a show of to all the connection, as a specimen of what Tozer blood could come to. . . . 'Mamma meant it too!' Phoebe said to herself with a sigh" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 14, 255). For the first time, Phoebe questions the reliability of the social language of rank and its accoutrements to speak the truth of individual worth:

> 'If this is what we have really sprung from, this is my own class, and I ought to like it; if I don't like it, it must be my fault. I have no right to feel myself better than they are. It is not position that makes any difference, but individual character.' . . . [I]t was after all indifferent comfort, and had not her temperament given her a strong hold of herself, and power of subduing her impulses, it is much to be feared that Phoebe would have dropped her grandmother's

> arm as they approached the station.
> (PJ vol. 1, ch. 14, 257)

Fortunately, however, claiming and serving her "homely origin" is an association from which Phoebe feels "she could not suffer" because it is undertaken in the name of "Duty," and being "'of use'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 238, 237). Her understanding of the inherent value to the individual of being useful recalls the moral foundation of the work ethic which has long been her guiding principle. As she remarked earlier to her mother, "'So long as an occupation is honest and honorable, and you can do your duty in it, what does it matter? One kind of work is just as good as another. It is the spirit in which it is done'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 5, 102). This occasion provides her with the opportunity "to put her principles to the test" and she finds that the loss of social status and meaning "gave her something of the feeling of a martyr, which is always consolatory and sweet" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 244-45).

Clearly, in spite of her intent to serve her family, Phoebe's work continues to serve her sense of herself. Her only object is her own identity, an integrity which she feels will preserve her from the humiliation of being associated with a "'[n]ot . . . attractive class'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 1, 7): "[I]f hazard produced the butterman in the midst of the finest of her acquaintances, Phoebe would still have been perfectly at her ease. She would be herself, whatever happened" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 12, 238-39). The 'self' that will preserve her, and be served, in its turn, by her willing sacrifice of status, is the purely social one that insisted she must take up a labour for others to acquire a publicly-recognizable moral identity (i.e. the self-abnegating woman). This identity becomes available as an authentic representation of Phoebe only when she commits all aspects of herself--both the public and the as-yet-unplumbed private--to being selflessly of use to another. Phoebe's full commitment does not take place while she serves the interests of her grandparents (or of those in trade), but when she takes up the cause of May and consolidates her alignment with the values of the professional class (Poovey 172-73).

When Phoebe picks up the incriminating scrap in May's study and resolves that "if anything she could do could benefit the [family], the effort on her part should not be wanting" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 10, 184), she is responding both to "obligations" she has incurred because of the Mays' willing affiliation with her despite her inferior status, and to the "genuine regard and friendliness" she feels towards them ("her heart was touched and softened" by their apparent liberality) (PJ vol. 3, ch. 10, 182-83). In her grandfather's study, Phoebe finds and hides the bill upon which May has forged Tozer's signature. It is "a step which was important indeed, though at the moment she did not fully realize it's importance, and did it by instinct only[,]

. . . almost without consciousness of what she was doing" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 10, 204). Although a desire for social affiliation with a desirable class clearly underwrites the moral 'instinct' that motivates this endeavour, it is Phoebe's private moral identity that she risks to execute it. Not only does she steal, but she also obstructs the processes of law when they are about to close in on the now-mad May:

> She had taken the responsibility of the whole upon herself by the sudden step she had taken last night . . . She did not know whether her theft of the bill would really stop the whole proceedings, as had seemed so certain last night; and what if she was found out, and compelled to return it, and all her labour lost! (PJ vol. 3, ch. 11, 221)

As her grandfather obliquely notes when Phoebe asks him to leave the law out of the resolution of the crime and to forgive the culprit as his doctrinal background insists he should, this autonomous feminine intervention in the public domains of legal and commercial 'business' transfers moral authority from the sphere of social existence into that of private, or personal, being:

> 'The Bible's spiritual, but there's trade, and there's justice. A man ain't clear of what he's done because you forgive him. What's the law for else? . . . The law, that ain't a individual. . . . Now looking at it in a public way, I ain't got no right to forgive.'
> (PJ vol. 3, ch. 10, 202-03)

Catherine Hall notes that this implied "linking of the religious with the domestic was extended to the division between the public and the private sphere, . . . between the world as hostile and the home as loving . . . [and was a] commonplace in Victorian England" (24). Thus, in the view of the petit bourgeois Tozer, a vengeful and impersonal "justice" is appropriately specified by the social epistemology that determines his life. Such a view distinguishes him at the level of 'authentic' morality from his 'naturally' middle-class granddaughter. That is, her values are constructed as 'real' precisely because they inhere in the identity she is claiming. Tozer's are less 'real' because they are to be imposed from outside the individual and by a man-made institution. By definition Tozer and his justice are 'not-natural' and 'merely social.'

This passage also reveals that, for Phoebe, the step toward selfless labour appropriates "'business, . . . justice, . . . [and] trade'" as concerns of the private individual, and, thus, as appropriately defined and worked out by the labouring inhabtants of the private realm. The passage's implicit criticism of the justice available in the public domain also effectively "collapses the boundary between the private sphere . . . and the public . . . where laws are made and enforced by men" (Poovey 65). Because her work in the May's behalf is to protect the domestic world from the public consequences of the father's economic irresponsibility--and Phoebe knows that these consequences will spell "disgrace, ruin, the loss of [May's] position, the shame of his profession, moral death indeed" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 11, 213)--the selfless state that motivates it can be understood as a spiritual force that operates upon Phoebe to re-create her as an authentically feminine (domestic) individual whose moral authority transcends the 'merely social' to work a larger justice upon the limited institutions of public (male) life:

> [Phoebe] was not afraid that she was going wrong or suffering her fancy to stray further than the facts justified; neither was she troubled by any idea of going beyond her sphere by interfering thus energetically in her friend's affairs. . . . It seemed natural to her to do whatever might be wanted, and to act upon her own responsibility. . . . She knew that she was right, and she knew moreover that in this whole matter she alone was right. (PJ vol. 3, ch. 11, 229-30)

As I suggested earlier, this authentic 'rightness', even more distinctly than Phoebe's dress and accomplishments, both sets her apart from the values which identify her tradesmen relatives and aligns her appropriately with those of the gentility to which she has only superficially pretended all of her life. Even when she converts Tozer to her perspective, that "vulgar old fellow" responds primarily to the social implications of his former position:

> He had not looked up to the clergyman [May] as Cotsdean did, but he had looked up to the gentleman his customer, as being upon an elevation very different from his own, altogether above and beyond him; and the sight of this superior being, thus humbled, maddened, gazing at him with wild terror and agony, more eloquent than any supplication, struck poor old Tozer to the very soul. (PJ vol. 3, ch. 13, 283)

His comprehension of the larger justice that his granddaughter works to enact is fleeting: "[A]s he saw the three gentlemen going away, nature awoke in the old butterman. He put out his hand and plucked Northcote by the sleeve. 'I'll not say no to that money [for payment of the forged bill], not now, Mr. Northcote, Sir,' he said" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 13, 287). Clearly nature has awakened in Phoebe too and the narrative associates her execution of the feminine moral industry that expresses it with the long-awaited opportunity for Phoebe to take up her "Career" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 2, 29).

When Phoebe asserts her own ability for ethical discrimination over that of institutionalized morality, Tozer attempts to re-inscribe her autonomous determinations as socially-recognizable breaches of both femininity and bourgeois values. He calls her a "'jade,'" "'a damned piece of impudence,'" and a "'brazen young hussy . . . [who] dare[s] set up [her] face among so many men'" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 13, 266, 267, 278). Juxtaposed to the old materialist's imputations against Phoebe are Clarence's appreciations of her. His values are identical to Tozer's and he opposes the will of his crass father to assert them:

> 'Look here, Sir," [Clarence] said ingratiatingly, 'we don't want to offend you . . . but I can't go on having coaches [tutors] for ever, and here's the only one in the world that can do the business instead of coaches. Phoebe knows I'm fond of her, but that's neither here nor there. Here is the one that can make something of me. I ain't clever, . . . but she is. I don't mind going into parliament, making speeches and that sort of thing, if I've got her to back me up. But without

> her I'll never do anything, without her you may put me in a cupboard, as you've often said. Let me have her, and I'll make a figure and do you credit. . . . If that's what it comes to, her before you. What you've made of me ain't much, is it? but I don't mind what I go in for, as long as she's to the fore. Her before you.
> (PJ vol. 3, ch. 15, 291-92)

In keeping with the unsentimental and pragmatic philosophy of the Dissenters' intellectual heritage, Phoebe's instrumentality to the creation of a meaningful (which is to say useful) life determines the value with which she is perceived by Clarence. The terms of his avowal are reminiscent of commerce and the narrator emphasizes the parallels between a marriage proposal and a job application:

> [Phoebe] was more like an applicant for office kept uncertain whether she was to have a desirable post or not, than a girl on the eve of a lover's declaration. . . . Phoebe had been used to [Clarence] all her life, and had never thought badly of the heavy boy whom she had been invited to amuse when she was six years old. . . . She was willing, quite willing, to undertake the charge of him [now], to manage, and guide, and make a man of him. (PJ vol. 3, ch. 7, 124-25)

In this way, Oliphant suggests Phoebe's desire to marry Clarence as a kind of loyal, maternal impulse that may only be satisfied through the labour of leadership. She further indicates that Phoebe's labour of domestic manufacture (she will produce Clarence-the-man from the material of Clarence-the-boorish-child) is a feminine vocation with constitutional similarities to professional industry. This construction also denies prevalent "images of some kinds of work [as] . . . exempt from alienation because they seemed completely outside the system of wages and surplus value" (Poovey 156). Phoebe unabashedly admits that Clarence represents financial and social security to her: "He meant wealth (which she dismissed in its superficial aspects as something meaningless and vulgar, but accepted in its higher aspects as an almost necessary condition of influence), and he meant all the possibilities of future power" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 2, 29-30). She also reveals, however, that she is willing to sacrifice all material gain to execute her self-determined labour, which now closely resembles a labour of love:

> 'I cannot prevent you [Mr. Copperhead] from insulting me, . . . which is rather hard, . . . seeing that I shall have to drag your son through the world somehow, now that you have cast him off. He will not give me up, I know, and honour prevents me from giving him up. So I shall have hard work enough, without any insults from you. . . . I could have made a man of him. I could have backed him up to get on as well as most men; but it will certainly be uphill work now.
> (PJ vol. 3, ch. 14, 310-11)

The terms in which Phoebe defends her right to this job--work, production, and dedicated professionalism--are ones that Copperhead's ideology identifies as valuable. Phoebe's use of such rational, market-related language justifies his capitulation and legitimates the young woman's earlier speculations about what Clarence could be to her: "He would be as good as a profession, a position, a great work to her" (PJ vol. 3, ch. 2, 29). She demonstrates a capability for this undertaking that Poovey says "could also be used to authorize expanding woman's employment beyond the sphere that was supposedly home to women's nature" (15). Even more than expansion, however, the capability vindicates Phoebe's appropriation of the work as a part of her 'natural' expression of her 'true' self. Indeed, the last reference to Phoebe in the novel indicates that she does become Clarence's speech writer and, in that disguised (but no less actually public) capacity, has the ability and even an obligation to disseminate her domestic philosophy and private-sphere morality across all spheres of existence and classes of society (Gallagher 189):

> Clarence got into Parliament, and the reader, perhaps (if Parliament is sitting) may have had the luck to read a speech in the morning paper of Phoebe's composition, and if he ever got the secret of her style would know it again, and might trace the course of a public character for years to come by that means. (PJ vol. 3, ch. 16, 324)

While Peterson notes that "dual participation of men and women in a single career was ubiquitous in Victorian middle-class life," Oliphant supplies the truth to what Peterson herself offers as a polemic: "I would go so far as to say that men's [professional] work was women's work" (167). As we have seen, Oliphant too would go that far.

Oliphant posits the desire to work in The Chronicles as an impulse to domestic service. If that service is in the interests of the well-being and self-realization of others (as it is for Mrs. Vincent, Susan Vincent, Mrs. Hilyard [at first], Lucilla Marjoribanks, Rose Lake, Ursula May, and

Phoebe Beecham [later]), then it is also a means by which a woman may meaningfully express her own 'authentic' morality and essential identity. If the work serves only the social needs of the worker or undermines the stability and coherence of the domestic sphere, then it becomes a measure of both a woman's professionalized 'self-full-ness' and her potential to subvert the 'natural' selflessness of others. Oliphant examines this difference, first, through Hilyard when the needlewoman returns to her humble rooms and her slops in an effort only to protect herself from prosecution rather than to continue the financial support of her daughter; second, through Barbara Lake when she chooses a remuneratively rewarding form of domestic labour as a retreat from the world (her governess position) instead of the inherently rewarding seclusion of private domestic practice; and, third, through Phoebe when she decides to care for her grandparents as a domestic method of securing purely social and material gains (although it must also be noted that Phoebe, in keeping with the 'authentic' self she is to realize, does not corrupt anyone). The distinguishing feature of these opportunities for self-identification is the object of labour. That is, on the one hand, work allows the possibility of a self-made woman, but only selfless labour (paid or otherwise) can produce a worthwhile identity whose transcendent value diffuses itself freely through all levels and spheres of society. Such an opportunity realizes the ambition of the moral middle class to assert the validity of its philosophy as a necessary foundation for the shaping of an ideal "national character" (Poovey 161). The space in which this labour for others is to take place is a necessarily feminine one because the work of service is, by definition, a function of the domestic sphere; it is 'woman's work.' On the other hand, labour that does not express such a 'natural' dedication to the beneficial production of like-souled others only makes possible an identity whose worth is fixed within a particular class or the material realm of manifest rewards. It is not a feminine/domestic labour, but one that situates itself solely within the masculine realms of public society (as opposed to domestic society) and market value. Without a functional connection to the operations of the moral, domestic sphere, such labour may serve only the ends of public identity.

# Chapter Five

## Models of Manhood and the Object of Work

The context in which I have been using the term 'self-serving' seems to offer it solely as a pejorative term and the consequences of its presence as a motivation seem consistently negative. Not so. For the men of The Chronicles, moral and manly character is commensurate with the degree to which the service of others is supplanted by service to one's own titular identity. That is, a man is truly a man and truly moral to the extent that he is not determined by the relationship his 'natural' work places him in to those he works for and, conversely, to the extent that he *is* determined by the integrity of the position itself. To work for something other than the absolute of masculine self-realization is to relativize both individual identity and moral authority, or to feminize oneself in the eyes of society. To fully substantiate my contention that Oliphant makes use of these hegemonic and gendered constructions of Victorian identity to claim the working space as a feminized extension of the domestic sphere, I will closely examine the nature and object of the working relationship within which each of Arthur Vincent, Cavendish, and Reginald May seeks to negotiate a worthwhile self.

Arthur Vincent, "fresh from Homerton [Dissenting Academy], in the bloom of hope and intellectualism," arrives in Carlingford to take up his post as pastor of Salem chapel (SC ch. 1, 3). The congregation's first glimpse of him reveals the difference between this new spiritual leader and the old one, Mr. Tufton:

> A greater change could not have possibly happened. . . . [T]he interesting figure of the young minister went up the homely pulpit-stairs, and appeared, white-browed, white-handed, in snowy linen and glossy clerical apparel, where old Mr. Tufton, spiritual but homely, had been wont to impend over the desk and exhort his beloved brethren. (SC ch. 1, 3)

Old Tufton was clearly 'at one' with his suggestively domestic post and his people, a "homely" man at a "homely" pulpit before his "brethren." Arthur, however, impressed "few of the auditors" of his first sermon more "than the Miss Hemmings, . . . sole representatives [in the congregation] of a cold and unfeeling aristocracy," by saying "not much . . . about the beloved brethren; nothing very stimulating . . . to the sentiments and affections. . . . But then what eloquence! what an amount of thought" (SC ch. 1, 4). Both Arthur's background and his appearance (the whiteness of his hands and linen) align him with the upper-middle and aristocratic classes. His critical discourse against "the Church Establishment" (an institution which, "though outwardly prosperous, was in reality . . . profoundly rotten") derives its shape and content from such philosophical forums of social analysis as "the 'Nonconformist' and the 'Eclectic Review,'" both of which the narrator suggests are publications for and by male professional intellectuals because they, like most newspapers "of late days[,] . . . [s]carcely . . .

condescended . . . to address men who are not free of 'society', and learned in all its ways. . . . Young Vincent was one of those who accept the flattering implications" (SC ch. 1, 4-6). Arthur's perception of himself as a progressive professional in the masculine field of social criticism (Ferris 26) and constitutional reform of the nation leads him to form his "not ungenerous ambition" of "mak[ing] for himself a position of the highest influence in his new sphere:"

> He pictured to himself how, by-and-by, those jealous doors in Grange Lane would fly open at his touch, and how the dormant minds within would awaken under his influence. It was a blissful dream to the young pastor. . . . All he wanted--all any man worthy of his post wanted--was a spot of standing ground, and an opportunity of making the Truth--and himself--known. . . . Thus it will be seen he came to Carlingford with elevated expectations--by no means prepared to circulate among his flock, and say grace at Mrs. Tozer's 'teas,' and get up soirees to amuse the congregation. (SC ch. 1, 5)

Arthur's idealistic vision of himself as an autonomous revisionist is shattered by his first social encounter with his flock. Reality, in the form of a "hand which had just clutched a piece of bacon," reaches out for him at Mrs. Tozer's 'tea,' subordinating his own genteel and "white-handed" illusion to its authoritative command for union (SC ch. 1, 7, 3). As Davidoff notes, "[class] ambivalences as well as gendered overtones gathered around the concept of work in the Victorian period are evident in elaborate meanings ascribed to hands--their whiteness, smoothness or roughness and dirt--as visible signs of non-labour but also of femininity" ("'Adam Spoke First'" 241). The truth of this observation is borne out when the "overpowered Mr. Vincent" learns that he is merely one of "'them getting their livin' off'" the 'real' working members of the congregation and that his continued subsistence depends on his ability to gratify their wishes (SC ch. 1, 7, 9): "'if a minister ain't a servant, we pays him his salary at the least and expects him to please us'" (SC ch. 15, 174). Hilyard confirms Arthur's "sensation of dreadful dwindlement [and] humiliation" (SC ch. 1, 14) when she reveals her interpretation of the nature of his new identity: "'[Y]ou are a minister, and are bound to have no inclinations of your own, but to give yourself up to the comfort of the poor'" (SC ch. 2, 21). Although she is wrong about who it is that Arthur is obligated to comfort ("'the poor'" being a group for which the congregation offers its support through institutionalized "'charities'" [SC ch. 1, 13]), she has the relationship exactly right. Arthur is to depend--economically, socially, and personally--upon his flock. Before his eyes,

> that tribune from which he was to influence the world, that point of vantage which was all a true man needed for the making of his career, dwindled into a miserable scene of trade, . . . a preaching-shop, where his success was to be measured by the seat-letting, and his soul decanted out into periodical issue under the seal of Tozer & Co. (SC ch. 4, 48)

Arthur discovers that, instead of becoming a professional reproducer of the cultural reform inscribed by his intellectual peers in the public (masculine) realm of critical discourse, his life is to be produced, or re-formed, by his determining relationship within the private (feminine) sphere of service and dependence. He is "constructed not as an individual . . . but as just one instance of labour, an interchangeable part subject to replacement in case of failure or to repair in case of defect;" he is alienated from his self-identifying labour because it is owned by others (Poovey 104). Whereas Mrs. Vincent obliquely refers to this "'connection'" with the congregation as a "'sacred tie'" that "'should never be broken'" (SC ch. 22, 256), the congregation itself overtly regards it as being "wedded" in a "bond of union . . . far from being indissoluble" at the "not inconsolable husband['s]" discretion (SC ch. 21, 238). It is a moral identity that Arthur possesses, but it is also a feminine one that closely resembles Ursula's in her unrecognized service to her father.

Within a short time after Arthur has taken up his post, two events occur to threaten the stability of the domesticated professional union between the congregation and its pastor: Arthur meets Lady Western and his sister disappears. The first of these disruptions creates a breach in the relationship that Arthur's employers compare to infidelity in marriage.

The first time Arthur meets Lady Western, he has just ended a social call to Mr. Tufton, during which the old pastor admonished him to

> 'Be careful, my dear brother. You must keep well with your deacons. You must not take up prejudices against them. Dear Tozer is a man of a thousand . . . The trouble he takes and the money he spends . . . is unknown--and,' added the old pastor, awfully syllabling the long word in his solemn bass, 'in-con-ceiv-able.'
> (SC ch. 3, 30-31)

Tufton's daughter, Adelaide, adds, "'You are something new for them to pet and badger. I wonder how long they'll be of killing Mr. Vincent'" (SC ch. 3, 31). Far from being discouraged about the bear-baiting nature of his new masters, however, Arthur at first takes comfort from this exchange because it only delineates further the differences between himself and his congregation. In fact, his certainty about his own superiority--a sense of self that he clearly derives from his middle-class education--fills him with revolutionary zeal:

> It was for him to show the entire community of Carlingford the difference between his reign and the old regime. It was for him to change the face of affairs--to reduce Tozer into his due place of subordination, and to bring in an influx of new life, intelligence, and enlightenment over the prostrate butterman. The very sordidness and contraction of the little world into which he had just received so distinct a view, promoted the revulsion of feeling which now cheered him. The aspiring young man could as soon as have consented to lose his individuality altogether as to acknowledge the most distant possibility of accepting Tozer as his guide, philosopher, and friend. (SC ch. 3, 32)

The sight of Salem chapel intrudes on this "illusion," however, "with its black railing, and locked gates, and dank flowerless grass inside," and, instinctively, Arthur knows that his dreams of salvation and enlightenment through the assertion of his individuality ("the truest messenger") cannot come to fruition within the bleak enclosure of his new identity; "[n]o--nothing of the kind" is available to him, "a very different man from Mr. Tufton" (SC ch. 3, 32-33). Instead of continuing his round of social calls to the members of his perversely shepherding flock as he should (and as he has said he would), Arthur responds to "an impulse which he did not explain to himself" (but which the narrator does specify as a yearning for "kindred spirits . . . to answer to the call of his") and makes his way to Back Grove Street (SC ch. 3, 33).

Although he feels a sort of chivalric "sympathy and compassion for the forlorn and brave creature" who labours there (Hilyard), it is not she who inspires Arthur to step fully into the manly identity to which he is only vaguely aware of being drawn (SC ch. 3, 33). It is Lady Western who appears before him, "a brilliant vision . . . resplendent in the sweetest English roses, the most delicate bewildering bloom" (SC ch. 3, 34). This description, which emphasizes Lady Western's beauty, delicacy, and aristocracy, constructs her as the idealized English princess in the desire for whom countless legendary knights have proven themselves and gained half a kingdom. Arthur (and now the name bears great identifying significance) is "transfixed all at once and unawares by that fairy lance" of "incomprehensible ecstasy" and he immediately intercedes on her behalf to facilitate her passage beyond "an imp, whose rags were actually touching [the Lady's] sacred splendid draperies" (SC ch. 3, 34-35).

Although Oliphant clearly intends that this mock rescue of a damsel in distress amuse her readers, it also reveals that the "kindred spirit" Arthur yearns for and discovers in Back Grove Street exists within himself as the chivalric male whose fantasy of desire should, according to romantic legend, culminate in his self-realization and social ascension. Oliphant's use of this convention is ambiguous, however, because, as Carol Dyhouse points out, such male self-identification was recognized by Victorian women as "an expression of kindly contempt rather than a reverence for women" and so may be understood here as Arthur's disguised desire to assert some measure of masculine superiority (152). Whichever way Oliphant intends it, this emergence of sexual desire in Arthur does create a conflict of identity within him that the narrative has already indicated arrays itself across the gendered boundary between dependence, subordination, and conformity of self (the category of the feminine) and autonomy, agency, and individuality (the category of the masculine). Repeatedly, Arthur chooses the latter category as most representative of who he wants to be:

> He walked forth in a dream . . . ready to . . . do any . . . preposterous act of homage--and just as apt to blaze up into violent self-assertion should any man humble him who had been thus honoured [by Lady Western's attention]. . . . Here, then, was the society he had dreamed of, opening its perfumed doors to receive him. (SC ch. 6, 66)

The aggressive, desiring self that Arthur is prepared to assert, violently if necessary, is not the self who is bound in service to the congregation. He is "rapt out of [that self], out of his work, out of all the ordinary regions of life and thought" (SC ch. 7, 67). Arthur experiences what Poovey calls an "internal alienation [from his self-determining labour that is] translated into a narrative of personal development, which one woman inaugurate[s] and another reward[s]" (9). To the as-yet-ignorant congregation, however, Arthur's "long delicious reveries, . . . which forbade labour [on his imminent sermon], yet nourished thought," appear to be arduous intellectual labour on their behalf, a miscomprehension that further emphasizes the differences between the congregation and its pastor (SC ch. 7, 67). Arthur himself is "disgusted . . . to have done his work so poorly--contemptuous of those who were pleased with it" (SC ch. 7, 67-68). Clearly, Arthur's fantasies are producing a man who is completely unfit to embody the passive, subordinate, and determined identity of the Dissenting pastor. He must find an appropriate site for his self-development. At first, Lady Western's affections seem to offer Arthur just such a haven for self-realization:

> He could not bring himself to bear the irksome society that surrounded him, in the state of elevation and excitement he was in. Tozer was unendurable, and [his daughter] was to be avoided at all costs. . . . [H]e spent the days in a kind of dream, avoiding all his duties, paying no visits, doing no pastoral work, neglecting the . . . sermon . . . [L]ife was to go on . . . with a loftier aim and a higher inspiration. . . . He thought . . . how he should charm [Lady Western] into interest in his difficulties, and beautify his office, and the barren spot in which he exercised it, with her sympathy. He imagined himself possessed of her ear, certain of a place by her side, a special guest of her own election.
> (SC ch. 7, 69)

The day of his visit to Lady Western's home on Grange Lane is a pivotal one for Arthur, "a day of days--such a day as people reckon by, months after" (SC ch. 7, 69-70), although not in the way that Arthur had envisioned:

> [E]re he had spoken three words [to Lady Western], he suddenly came to a stop, perceiving that not only Lady Western's attention but her ear was lost, and that already another candidate for her favour had possession of the field. . . . And here was he left, out of the sunshine of her presence in the midst of Carlingford society.
> (SC ch. 7, 71)

'Society' is not being "cruel, or repulsive, or severely exclusive" in not acknowledging the identity that Arthur's masculinity (his desire) has laboured to create; it "simply did not know him, could not make out who he was" (SC ch. 7, 72). His congregation knows, however, in spite of his sudden expostulations about "the wrongs of a privileged class [toward a lower one, in which] the true zest of dissidence [can] be found," that "[a] minister of [their] connection as was well acquainted among them sort of folks would be out o' nature" among them (SC ch. 8, 76, 85). The congregation sees Arthur's yearning for affiliation and identification with the local aristocracy as being akin to an infidelity with "'[p]ainted ladies, that come out of a night with low necks and flowers in their hair [and that] ain't fit company for a good pastor. Them's not the lambs of the flock'" (SC ch. 8, 85). The upper-class "lambs" differ from the lower-class flock primarily in their ability to inspire Arthur's desire. The construction of them rendered by the congregation implicitly acknowledges the upper class's ability to gratify Arthur's yearnings in a way that the more humble group cannot. Desire for one of the gentry is perceived as a transgressive act. It not only crosses class boundaries, but it also threatens to breach the gendered boundary that contains Arthur within his feminized subordination. If Arthur desires, to the extent that he threatens his containment, then he is too masculine to maintain the 'authenticity' of his feminization; he is indeed "'out o' nature'" (SC ch. 8, 85). That is, he cannot be in 'true' service to the congregation--except in a secondary way; his primary service is to his desiring, masculine self. The opportunity, if taken up, to articulate his desiring self and, thus, to bring his full masculinity into being within the upper-class social circle is grounds for divorce in the Dissenting connection: "'A man as [likes to please himself] . . . ain't the man for Salem. We're different sort of folks, and we can't go on together'" (SC ch. 15, 175).

Originally motivated by desire, but now supported by philosophical principle (necessary in light of Lady Western's disinterest), Arthur determines to realize a more legitimate self than that allowed by the feminized "way and . . . work" he has come to loathe (SC ch. 16, 182): "He had gained nothing--changed in nothing--from his former condition: not even the golden gates of society had opened to the Dissenting minister; but glorious enfranchisement had come to the young man's heart" (SC ch. 13, 147). Since Lady Western refuses to become either the fixed object of his motivating desire or the anchoring goal of his self-identifying principle (which is based on affiliation and differentiation), Arthur is pulled back and forth between his binary selves. One moment he is the eager pastor and the next a rebellious young man confronting his oppressors:

> 'I will not submit to any inquisition . . . What right has any man in any connection to interfere with my actions? . . . Am I the servant of this congregation? Am I their slave? Must I account to them for every accident of my life? Nobody in the world has a right to make such a demand upon me!' (SC ch. 15, 174)

Only when his sister, Susan, disappears does it become clear that Arthur cannot identify himself through affiliation; one group is indifferent and the other is impossible. Instead, Arthur must comprehend himself through the differences he can establish between himself and the uncaring gentility and between himself and the determining bourgeoisie.

Differentiation is an active process of self-proclamation. It demands a dismantling of the rejected identities as well as a construction of the chosen one. The distinguished choice (and the process that leads to it) permits the perception of an individuality that is not available through 'mere' social affiliation. In order to bring about such a personalized identity, Arthur must first establish the fields of meaning in which definitions of his 'true self' cannot be found. He has already begun this elimination process with his distancing of himself from the servitude of his clerical position. Now he must construct the masculine field within which, in turn, he will then find the terms to define himself as he aspires to be. Once again, the definitively male task of rescuing females allows him to specify what he sees as the powerless terms of 'authentic' femininity as appropriately describing another and to inscribe the potent terms of manhood upon his emerging 'self.' With this range of meanings for 'authentic' masculinity in place, he can (and must in order to be a success in his own and Oliphant's view) take up the position within the field which best associates him with "the Truth" he has been trained to value (SC ch. 1, 5). Just one of these proofs of the "true man" (SC ch. 4, 48) is the ability to be emotionally strong and calmly rational when the situation demands it. Mrs. Vincent's panic-stricken arrival in Carlingford announces just such a situation as well as the beginning of Arthur's quest for 'self.'

When Mrs. Vincent arrives in Carlingford to consult her son about the indeterminate identity of Susan's suitor, Arthur has already had his 'day' and is "no longer the sentimentalist who had made the gaping assembly at Salem Chapel uneasy. . . . That dark and secret ocean of life . . . [had] opened up to him" and revealed the ability of passion to turn a working woman into an active and autonomous "wild creature [ready] to defend" the beloved object of her labours (SC ch. 11, 114-16). This same sort of transformation begins to take place in Arthur when "[n]ature awoke and yearned in him" for his sister and his mother to unite with him in a domesticity that would compensate him in some measure for his subordinate "lot" in Salem chapel (SC ch. 12, 131). According to Poovey "[t]his desire is insatiable and potentially transgressive; it begins in the home as the condition of the individual's individuation and growth; it motivates his quest for self-realization; and ideally, it is stabilized and its transgressive potential neutralized in the safe harbour of marriage" (90). Seemingly, Mrs. Vincent is in accord with Poovey's observation. She feels that his "'sacred tie'" to the congregation should neutralize his 'self-full' desire for self-assertion (SC ch. 22, 256). Although Arthur's desire marks, for her, the first "realising [of] the full strength of his manhood and independence," she also immediately re-asserts the ostensible impermeability of the boundaries that will prevent such a realization from possessing an empowered significance within his privatized professional life: "'You must not neglect a duty [to your flock], Arthur--not even for Susan's sake. Whatever happens to us, you must keep right [with them]'" (SC ch. 12, 131). The relationship of service that now defines Arthur's self constitutes "'his first duty,'" an obligation "'above [his] duty even to [his] sister,'" (SC ch. 15, 169, 165) and is clearly not the safe harbour that will neutralize transgression. These stirrings of desire for an authoritative self--expressed both in his attempt to overwhelm class barriers and in his 'natural' yearning to be the head of his own domestic arrangement--are frustrated by Mildmay's appropriation of the ostensible object of their activation; it "unmanned him utterly" (SC ch. 14, 159). With the opportunities to assert his masculine self denied him, the identity he possesses with relation to the congregation slips into "total blank unconsciousness" (SC ch. 18, 198), an epistemological void. Because Arthur determines to pursue Susan into just such an "abyss" of indeterminacy (SC ch. 18, 201), we can also understand that this chivalric quest is the means by which Arthur will display the development of his own individuality (Poovey 100).

During Arthur's first foray into the world in search of Susan and the consolidation of his own domestic sphere, he goes to the boarding house where his sister's abductor apparently receives his mail under the name of Fordham. There, he encounters "an elderly man, half servant, half master, in reality the proprietor of the place, ready either to wait or be waited on as occasion might require" (SC ch. 13, 133). This old man "perused" Arthur, "taking in every particular of his appearance, dress and professional looks" (SC ch. 13, 133), "surveying [him] with all the indolence of a lackey who knows he has to deal with a man debarred by public opinion from the gratifying privilege of knocking him down" (SC ch. 13, 141). When the real Fordham (the man "who was not Susan's lover--not Susan's destroyer--but a man to be trusted 'with life--to death'") similarly refuses to acknowledge Arthur's moral authority to question the identity of an individual who possesses the absolute and self-sufficient particularity of class, Arthur feels "a wild, bitter, hopeless rivalry" against those whose significance to the world is self-evident and valued: "they were the real creatures for whom life and the world were made--he and his poor Susan the shadows to be absorbed under them" (SC ch. 19, 217). This rivalry, which is both social and sexual in nature, enables Arthur to engage in active, violent resistance to the subordination that identified him to the landlord as a man who can safely be denied:

> He took [Fordham's] indifference to his trouble . . . as somehow an affront, though he could not have explained how it was so; and this notwithstanding his own consciousness of realising this silent conflict and rivalry with Fordham, even more deeply in his own person than he did the special misery which had befallen his own house.
> (SC ch. 20, 220)

Although the object of the competition between the two men is clearly Lady Western, the issue at stake is which man will be able to determine the constituents of his private world. Because this issue is being addressed in the world of society, where class and knowledge of male identity prevent Arthur's establishment of a desirable domestic sphere, the narrative's tension between the public and the private remains influential for Arthur. Until now, his response to this tension has been the attempted re-inscription of his privatized male identity as an alternate expression of culturally acceptable concepts of manhood. That is, he has tried to redefine his subordination as a social mission by which he might bring enlightenment to "dormant minds" and at the same time "mak[e] the Truth . . . [of] himself" known (SC ch. 1, 5). Instead of moving in this circular way--from the private realm to the public and back to the private--Arthur must progress steadily into the sphere he will occupy as a fully-realized man.

As if cognizant that he can no longer passively allow his relative position to determine him, Arthur becomes a fully active man. He is not willing to wait submissively for permission to enter the domain of the "real creatures," but "press[es] alone upon the threshold, forgetful and indifferent that the master of the house stood behind . . . What were such circumstances to him, as he approached the conclusion of his search" (SC ch. 20, 223). Arthur is now a man to turn "with sudden fury" upon Fordham and effect his will (SC ch. 20, 224). No longer is he the relativized, feminized figure whose commitment to, and dependence on, the service of others for his worth makes him a safe and insubstantial presence in the public view. Now he is a dangerously virile presence whose "passionate anxiety . . . [made] the crowd g[i]ve way before him, recognising his right of entry; the very policeman . . . yielded to him in the force of his passion" (SC ch. 24, 276). Arthur has arrived at an absolute identity; he is fully assimilated into manhood, though he has yet to individualize himself within that signifying field. It is a development that Hilyard notes when, instead of identifying with the necessary resistance of the oppressed to the oppressor, Arthur aligns himself with institutionalized and patriarchal authority and makes her his prisoner:

> [Hilyard] recognised instinctively that here she had come face to face with those blind forces of nature upon which no arguments can tell. 'You were in much less doubt about your power of saving souls the last time I heard you, Mr. Vincent. . . . I am sorry to see you look excited--but after such exertions, it is natural.' . . . Her words fell upon his ears without any meaning.

> Only a dull determination possessed him. . . . 'Ah!' said Mrs. Hilyard, with a startled, panting breath. 'You have come to the inexorable,' she said, . . . 'most men do, one time or another. You decline meeting us on our ground, and take to your own.' (SC ch. 28, 310-11)

The new ground that Arthur has taken possession of is that of masculine self-determination. It is an authority over self and other that liberates him personally so that he may become more fully and openly who he really is, but that also limits him socially, so that his social place may also reflect his authenticated self. To "again ascend the pulpit, and go through all his duties" with his former self-abnegation is now impossible; Arthur would be "an imposter, doing all this mechanically" (SC ch. 29, 331). Having recognized that the feminized role of pastor cannot express his authentic identity, he most now align his professional life with his inner self. He apparently recovers the alienated expression of himself and becomes "the [representative] site at which the alienation endemic to all kinds of labour surface[s] and [is] erased" (Poovey 13). The sermon he gives in this "exalted condition of mind" expresses the "fulness that was in his heart" and displays "the unpremeditated skill of a natural orator" (SC ch. 29, 333). The congregation responds to Arthur's spontaneous revelation of his authenticity with full communion; "his heart had made communication to other hearts in his audience almost without knowing it" (SC ch. 29, 334). For the first time, he is living up to his ambition of "making the Truth--

and himself known;" for the first time he is "worthy of his post" (SC ch. 1, 5). At heart, he is precisely what his early environment and training have prepared him to be, a professional intellectual whose discourse is meaningful only when its masculine individuality operates to substantiate the precise authoritative sphere of the speaker. Whereas Arthur's previous, service identity permitted his free passage across and within both the range of classes and all spheres of existence (domestic, professional, social, etc.), his new 'self' is obstructed from crossing identifying social barriers, by virtue of its absolute (or what Hilyard termed its "'inexorable'" [SC ch. 28, 311]) fixity within a particular construction of moral manhood.

When the 'true' Arthur tries to re-enter the upper-class world of Lady Western, he is told that although Hilyard once "'trusted in [him] so much, . . . now she is afraid of [him]'. . . . In that very moment . . . he recognized . . . the madness of his dream [of affiliation with the upper class through Lady Western]. . . . [He] found the door now close shut--enclosing the other [his rival, Fordham]--shutting him out" (SC ch. 31, 350-51). The members of that elevated circle have been able, through the tasks of his laborious quest, to "make out who he [is]" and they know that he is not one of them, but a rival to one of its most valued constituents (SC ch. 7, 72). Nor does he 'belong' to or with his congregation. All he has left is the full expression of himself. He has entered the final stages of individuation in which competition is rewritten as an awakening of "an integral part of the individual--as one of the forces behind individual development" (Poovey 114). Although Tozer attempts to advise him in this endeavour, Arthur's response recalls his earlier unwillingness to surrender his individuality by relying on the butterman "as his guide [and] philosopher" (SC ch. 3, 32):

> 'Don't suppose I don't understand how you've fought for me [with the congregation], but now the business is mine, and I can take no more advice. Think no more of it; you have done all that you could do . . . and I thank you heartily; but now the business is in my hands.' (SC ch. 38, 416)

Again at the pulpit Arthur makes his public stand with "disclosures not only of his opinions but of himself . . . a human spirit in action--a human heart as it throbbed and changed" (SC ch. 42, 448). He denies the authority not only of his relationship to his congregation to determine who he is, but also of his material dependence on their perceptions of him to shape his expression of that identity:

> 'I am one of those who have boasted . . . that I received my title to ordination from no bishop, from no temporal provision, from no traditionary church, but from the hands of the people. Perhaps I am less sure than I was at first, when you were all disposed to praise me, that the voice of the people is the voice of God; but, however that may be, what I received from you I can but render up to you. I resign into your hands your pulpit, which you have erected with your money, and hold as your property. I cannot hold it as your vassal. . . . I find my old theories inadequate to the position in which I find myself, and all I can do is to give up the post where they have left me in the lurch. I am either your servant,

> responsible to you, or God's servant, responsible to Him . . . [N]o man can serve two masters.
> (SC ch. 42, 453)

Although the Colbys claim that Oliphant "never makes clear" whether Arthur leaves the ministry as a "result of wounded pride because his congregation had turned against him, or of a broken heart, because Lady Western has married someone else" (54-55), it seems very clear that Oliphant was addressing the issue of emotional gratification only to the extent that it interacts with labour to define the ground upon which men build a meaningful and worthwhile identity and to differentiate it from the site she is attempting to claim for women.

In deciding to serve God, Arthur has chosen to serve his own autonomy, thereby resolving the "great tension," which Davidoff identifies as particularly acute for clerics, "between the demands of masculine self-assertion and agency on the one hand and the obliteration of self in the service of Jesus Christ" ("'Adam Spoke First'" 238). That is, his determination to answer only to God is the establishment of a true moral order within himself. It may also be that his explicit dedication of himself solely to the patriarch of the trinity reflects his new unwillingness to claim affiliation with anything that is subsumed by the identity of another. Such 'self'-service takes him out of the "lurch" of indeterminacy, out of the void of "unmanned" being, and gives him both substance and voice in the masculine community of professional intellectuals with whom he has always identified himself:

> [E]ducation and prejudice and Homerton [had prepared him to envision a] Church of the Future--an ideal corporation, grand and primitive, not yet realised, but surely real, to be come at one day-- . . . but, in the mean time, the Nonconformist went into literature, as was natural, and was . . . the founder of the 'Philosophical Review,' the new organ of public opinion. (SC ch. 43, 457)

This admission does not reflect the "keen sense of personal failure" that the Colbys attribute to Arthur at this juncture in the novel, but an awakening to the necessities of a professional manhood that Arthur wants to claim (49). Instead of passively reflecting with his feminized person the difference between his Dissenting community and the traditional world, Arthur now actively produces, through his reclaimed masculine identity, the philosophical ground upon which that difference is inscribed. Instead of being created in service, he now possesses and wields the "organ" of creation and "decant[s his soul] out into periodical issue under [his own] seal" (SC ch. 4, 48). In Newton's words, he occupies a position unique to "professional, middle-class men" of the period:

> Half in the market and half out of it, ambiguously related to the status of gentleman as well, . . . well placed to promote values and forms of social authority seemingly unbound to rank or wealth . . . most particularly the value of 'disinterested' social knowledge. (2)

Although his separation from his congregation limits him, in his fixed self-determination, to the professional middle class, he is now free to establish in his private life the authority he possesses in the public view. Significantly, he does not retreat from this public identity to pursue a private role as he once did; now the private domain comes to him in the form of his mother, his sister, and his sister's ward. Domesticity beckons and, once again, desire is the connective emotion:

> His first glance at the younger face by [his sister's] side sent the blood back to his heart with a sudden pang and thrill which filled him with amazement . . . When [Susan and Alice] came into the lighted room, and he saw them divest themselves of their wrappings, and beheld them before him, visible tangible creatures and no dreams, Vincent was struck dumb. He seemed to himself to have been suddenly carried out of the meaner struggles of his own life and into the air of a court, the society of princes. . . . [I]t was all he could do to preserve his composure, and conceal the almost awe which possessed him.
> (SC ch. 43, 459)

The connection in this passage--of male sexuality, reality, social authority, and elevated status--re-creates in small the same pattern that the entire narrative has established for Arthur's production of a worthwhile self and refutes the opinion of the Colbys, who join their voice to those of Oliphant's contemporaries, that "the crudely melodramatic plot almost totally obscur[es] the important issues of the book" (49). One of the important issues in SC is identity and through the melodramatic episode Arthur has discovered that the most valuable manifestation of the male's working identity is not located in his objectification by his congregation (to whom he is merely a moral token of the group's economic and social power), but in his moral desire to objectify others (both as love objects and as objects of intellectual study). It is an important discovery indeed because, for Arthur, this determining authority constitutes "no dream," but the realized male truth of his enfranchised self, a self that may now legitimately and openly "enter that purely masculine and public world of national politic[al discourse]" (Rendall, Introduction 1).

* * * * * * * * * *

From Cavendish's first appearance in MM, authenticity of male identity is as important an issue as it is in SC. That is, when Lucilla takes Cavendish at face value and assumes that his comportment fixes him at a particular level in the social hierarchy, she implicitly acknowledges the stability for men of class-specific self-expression as a transparent and reliable signifier of both individual meaning and worth. Cavendish is known to Carlingford society, at first, as a "wit and a man of fashion [who] belonged to one of the best clubs in town, and brought down gossip with the bloom on it to Grange Lane (MM ch. 3, 43), a "person of refinement" whose only criticisms of Dr. Marjoribank's all-male "feastings" are of "a certain want of variety, and occasional over-abundance" (MM ch. 8, 80). To this "accomplished critic," the addition of "a certain air of feminine grace . . . and an amount of doubt and expectation" to the regular gatherings fulfills his requirements for both novel stimulation and elegant understatement (MM ch. 8, 80). The social expression of this sensual and self-indulgent identity, his comportment, is an instrument for which Lucilla has a use in the service project she initiates:

> When Mr. Cavendish came to [Lucilla] in his ingratiating way, and asked her how she could possibly let all the sparrows chirp like that when the nightingale was present, Miss Marjoribanks proved herself proof to the flattery. She said, 'Do go away, like a good man, and make yourself agreeable. There are so few men, you know, who can flirt in Carlingford. I have always reckoned upon you as such a valuable assistant. It is always an advantage to have a man who flirts.
> (MM ch. 10, 105)

This identification of Cavendish gives him access, not only to the 'society' of Carlingford, but also to Lucilla, to whom he becomes "'quite devoted'" (MM ch. 11, 113) as her social "right hand for [a] short but virtuous period" (MM ch. 13, 126). In this instrumental capacity, Cavendish serves his own identity and his personal ambition "to go into Parliament" because his comportment signifies a known and approved male self, one that might marry a woman, not out of love, but for her "[masterly] conception of social politics" (MM ch. 11, 111) and the possible use she might be to him in both his professional life and, as his sister observes, in the consolidation of his social identity:

> 'You know quite well if you married Lucilla Marjoribanks that there would be no more about [your place in society, which you have worked for and won . . . honestly]. There could be no more about it. Why, all Grange Lane would be in a sort of way pledged to you. . . . If you married

> Lucilla and got into Parliament, you might laugh at all the archdeacons in the world.'
> (MM ch. 20, 189-90)

Unfortunately, Cavendish cannot maintain the refined self-service that guarantees his assimilation within the highest ranks of society. He "ha[s] a weakness for a fine contralto" that overrides his rational self-determination and makes him vulnerable to identification by another (MM ch. 11, 12). That is, although his desire for Barbara is seen at first as "a little harmless amusement" that is not to be read as an intention to marry Barbara, "she meant it; and after all, there are occasions in which the woman's determination is the more important of the two" (MM ch. 13, 131-32). One of the occasions specified by the narrative is that during which desire for another competes successfully in a male with a desire to realize the socially-valued self. By allowing the gratification of his sensuality to be a more effective determining force than the service of this approved identity, Cavendish "followed Barbara's glowing cheeks and flashing eyes to his undoing" (MM ch. 13, 132). Barbara replaces comportment and his social labour as the active determinant, sign, and means of expression of his authentic self. This surrender of agency to another makes Cavendish unknowable as a moral affiliate of Carlingford society and that body "turned its cold shoulder on its early favourite" (ch. 14, 135). Instead of enclosing himself within the protective male certainties of autonomy, "the wretched culprit walked . . . through the unoccupied space which exposed him so unmercifully on every side" as the desired object of an immoral (which is to say a self-realizing female) subject (MM ch. 16, 150). His identity has become relative to that of his objectifier. In effect, this process feminizes him by negating the authenticity of the male self that previously made him a valued attendant of the cultivated evenings.

The narrative reinforces this revelation of the 'real' Cavendish by associating it with the arrival of Archdeacon Beverley, the man who eventually accuses Cavendish of being an illegitimate intruder into the moral middle class, "'a criminal who has stolen into [Dr. Marjoribank's] house and his confidence'" (MM ch. 33, 315). Cavendish knows that at least one of these accusations is false: "If he had called him an impostor, the culprit would have quailed and made no reply. But the exaggeration saved him" (MM ch. 33, 315). He knows that he is only "an adventurer" whose "fortune could not bring reality to his pretensions" (MM ch. 29, 285). This admission even more solidly links Cavendish to Barbara and her immorally materialistic and opportunistic values (symptomatic, in Mrs. Chiley's view, of "all adventurers" [MM ch. 18, 175]) because both expect the external trappings of social status to substitute for authentic affiliation in the matter of identity determination. As it did for Arthur Vincent, male sexuality operates to strip away the cover of illusion to specify the desiring subject at a social level commensurate with the degree to which the fully male self (autonomous and effective) is realized in the desiring process:

> [I]f the Archdeacon had never come to Carlingford, and if Mr. Cavendish had never been so weak as to be drawn aside by Barbara Lake . . . [then] on the whole, it might have been well [for Lucilla to marry him]. . . . Now, of course, all that was at an end. . . . Lucilla became regretfully conscious that now no fate higher than Barbara was possible for the unfortunate man who might once, and with hope, have aspired to herself. (MM ch. 31, 296)

Although Cavendish ultimately rejects this determination of himself--"He took [Lucilla's assertion that he and Barbara belonged together] as an insult inflicted upon him in cold blood" (MM ch. 34, 331)--his status in the genteel community is made irreparably ambiguous and he "disappeared . . . leaving a wonderful blank behind him" (MM ch. 35, 333).

After a ten-year absence, Cavendish returns to Carlingford to claim an identity that he hopes to derive from public labour and one that will irrevocably mark him as an affiliate of Carlingford society. He aspires to fill the long-awaited opening for the position of Member of Parliament for Carlingford, in which capacity he would be publicly acknowledged as the region's selected, representative voice: "In other days Mr. Cavendish had been the chosen candidate of Grange Lane; and the views which he expressed (and he expressed his views very freely) were precisely those of Dr. Marjoribanks" (MM ch. 38, 359). When he states his intention in the local paper, however, his political address is placed side by side with his rival's (Ashburton's) simple "expression of his conviction that he was the right man for Carlingford" (MM ch. 38, 359). Although Cavendish feels that Ashburton "'must be insane . . . or he would never dream of representing a town without a single word about his principles" (MM ch. 40, 384-85), he discovers that such a disclosure is unnecessary when the candidate's identity is fully known and exactly right. Thompson supports the social reality of this seeming political absurdity when she observes that Victorian "[c]andidates were selected and elections organized in accordance with the prevailing system of influence and patronage" (75). Whereas principles may be contested and evaluated, an approved male identity is an absolute mark of individual worth and merit with which no one will quarrel:

> 'My dear Miss Marjoribanks,' Mr. Ashburton said . . . 'Sir John takes exactly the other side in politics; and I am afraid the Doctor and the Colonel are not of the same way of thinking; and then my opinions--'
>
> 'If they are not of the same way of thinking we must make them,' said Lucilla . . . 'besides, what does it matter about opinions? I am sure I have heard you all saying over and over that the thing was to have a good man. Don't go and make speeches about opinions. . . . All that has to be said about it is simply that you are the right man. Papa might object to one thing and the Colonel might object to another, and then if Sir John, as you say, is of quite another way of thinking--But you are the man for Carlingford all the same; and none of them can say a word against that.' (MM ch. 37, 346-47)

Oliphant is criticizing, here, her society's dependence on the discourse of authentic morality and merit that is presumed to underwrite male identity. She exposes both the irrationality of such a superficial criterion and its complete trivialization of the real moral issues that depend on the political process. At the same time, she acknowledges the truth of Gallagher's conclusion about Victorian perceptions of the ideal relationship between a representative and his constituents: "the political realm should be a mirror image of the social realm" (227). That is, Oliphant suggests that known male identity is the only stable means by which society, in its contemporary organizational guise, is able to reflect and legislate the public presence of codified ideological values:

> [W]hen the Doctor turned to Mr. Ashburton's expression of his conviction that he was the right man for Carlingford, it cannot be denied that the force of that simple statement had a wonderful effect upon his mind--an effect all the greater, perhaps, in comparison with the political exposition made by the other unexpected candidate [Cavendish]. . . . The new candidate was right in politics; but, after all, Mr. Ashburton was a more satisfactory sort of person. He was a man people knew everything about, and a descendant of old Penrhyn, and had the Firs [a large local estate], and lived in it, and spent about so much money every year honestly in the face of the world [Colonel Chiley calls it 'spending his money like a Christian' (MM ch. 39, 370)]. When a man conducts himself in this way, his neighbours can afford to be less exacting as to his political opinions. (MM ch. 38, 359-60)

Oliphant's barbed and cynical commentary about the elitist nature of Victorian politics cannot be overlooked, here, any more than her pragmatic assessment can be of the male self-realization that forms the foundation of nationally effective and morally beneficial public life. That is, it is the male whose self is the subject and object of his public expression who will authorize himself in the political and social spheres and be seen as able to effect a universal (i.e. English) good. However much Cavendish's self-determination may seem to be the object of his discourse, his subject (and the means by which he proposes to make himself known) is "Reform [and] the Income tax" (MM ch. 40, 377), or the service of others. Even when the voting public is aware of itself as the receiver of that political service, it is suspicious of a man who does not establish his belonging (or his integrated identity) within their community: "'If he dealt regular, it might be different. Them's the sort of folks as a man feels drawn to,' said the true philosopher" (MM ch. 47, 440). Cavendish's lack of "'Christian'" presence in the business sector (MM ch. 39, 370) suggests that he is not quite knowable as an authentically moral man. He cannot, thus, rely on the "immense body of evidence in his favour" that accrues to "a gentleman known to [them] all" as Ashburton can, "[a]nd then Carlingford, as a general rule, did not care the least in the world about Reform" (MM ch. 40, 377). Thompson notes that this unconcern with political issues was not unique to the citizens of Carlingford: "real influence remained more closely tied to property and family than to the exercise of constitutional rights. . . . Voters respected the wishes [and opinions] of their best customers" (75-76). Unlike Ashburton, Cavendish has not "'ma[d]e a man of himself'" in a "lawful and righteous" manner, but "had the look of a man whose circumstances, spiritual and temporal, would not bear looking into" (MM ch 40, 385). He was not a self-made man before, but one determined by the identity of another and he cannot, therefore, "represent the highest form of morality as[a] free citizen . . . [possessing] mastery over others conceived as objects and dependants" (Davidoff, "'Adam Spoke First'" 235-36). It is a lack of self-sufficiency (a dependency) that continues to undermine the realization of his ambitions:

> Whose fault was it that . . . Carlingford knew him no more? . . . [T]his . . . was the only real ambition he had ever had; and he had thought within himself that if he won, he would change his mode of life . . . and become all at once a different man. When a man has made such a resolution, and feels not only that a mere success but a moral reformation depends upon his victory, he may be permitted to consider that he has a right to win; and it may be divined what his state of mind was when he made the discovery that even his old friends did not see his election to be of any such importance as he did, and could think of a miserable little bit of self-importance or gratified vanity more than of his interests--even the women who had once been so kind to him!
> (MM ch. 41, 390)

As Jane Scott observes, however,

> identity is not an objectively determined sense of self defined by needs and interests [and] politics is not [the ground upon which] the collective coming to consciousness of similarly situated individual subjects [is enacted]. Rather politics is the process by which plays of power and

knowledge constitute identity and experience. (5) Oliphant reveals that the community's knowledge about Cavendish obstructs his free reconstruction of himself and fixes him as oppositional to the representative identity that it wishes to serve its interests in Parliament. One woman, of course, does see the importance to Cavendish of being able to construct a worthwhile identity around professional labour and that woman is Barbara.

When Cavendish sees Barbara for the first time in ten years, he discovers that she "_had_ gone off, like himself, and, like himself, did not mean to acknowledge it. Her eyes . . . owned an indescribable amount of usage; and her cheeks, too, wore the deep roses of old, deepened and fixed by wear and tear" (_MM_ ch. 47, 443). Cavendish also finds that "[i]nstead of feeling ashamed of himself in her presence, as he had done in Lucilla's, [he] felt somehow consoled and justified and sympathetic. . . . Mr. Cavendish was still a great man in her eyes." (_MM_ ch. 47, 444). Relative to Barbara, who "had fallen from the pinnacle of youth," Cavendish remains in the elevated status he occupied formerly, before his identity crumbled (_MM_ ch. 47, 444). To her "he was still the paladin of old times, _the_ Mr. Cavendish whom people in Grange Lane were proud of" and "she trembled" when he took her hand, proving that "his presence here made to the full as great an impression as he had ever done" (_MM_ ch. 47, 445). Being the object of Barbara's love and desire is the only position available to Cavendish that can re-create him as the man he yearns to be taken for and he surrenders the social rewards he may have acquired through the election for "the emotional rewards that seemed available to every man in the castle of his home" (Poovey 11). This perception of substance is held only by Barbara, however. At a public level, his reunion with her constitutes a weight of evidence against the realistic potential of the moral identity to be derived from the office he aspires to. Society sees his willingness to re-subject himself to Barbara's determining attentions as "wickedness in high places [by a man] who sought the confidence of [his] fellows only to betray it, and offered to the poor man a hand red with his sister's (metaphorical) blood" (MM ch. 48, 449). His ambiguity has resolved itself in favour of the danger he represents, as a dependent identity, to national moral integrity because he cannot realize a "disinterested political self [implicitly] laden with values," but only a self wholly determined by "mere social facts . . . encumbered by personal interests" (Gallagher 233). The election that follows is merely statistical proof of the public judgement against Cavendish. Again, it is Barbara to whom Cavendish turns:

> She, by Heaven! might have had reason to find fault with him, and she had never done so; she had never perceived that he was stout, or changed from old times. . . . [A] man might be able to get on well enough with such a companion, where society was not so exacting . . . as in England. And the

> end was, that the feet of the defeated candidate carried him, ere ever he was aware, with some kind of independent volition of their own, to Mr. Lake's door--and it may be here said, once for all, that this visit was decisive of Mr. Cavendish's fate. (MM ch. 49, 464)

This unconscious dependence on Barbara's determining gaze reflects the truth of Cavendish's being. It is a truth that takes him out of the running for mobility in English society and fixes him in a devalued space somewhere outside his nation's moral hierarchy. As if to emphasize this indeterminate marginalization, Cavendish and Barbara simply disappear from the narrative (and, apparently, from England) at this point, although their marriage is noted (MM ch. 50, 479). They are united, but in a reversed configuration of dependent relations that can be allowed no moral substance in the social body that is Victorian England because it makes explicit the manner in which "the epistemelogical category 'woman' was actually not subordinate to or derived from the category 'man' but the basis of that category" (Poovey 79).

* * * * * * * * *

At the outset of PJ, Reginald May is as much a dependent and other-determined man as Arthur Vincent was and as Cavendish becomes. He has just returned from an ecclesiastic institution where he "'chose an academical career'" within the Church of England (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 300). For the time being, he lives with his father and his siblings and is, in May's view, "'depending on [him] for everything, useless, bringing in nothing'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 299). In this harsh assessment of the twenty-three year old, May distinguishes his oldest son from his other children only by noting that, of the "'six of you, one more helpless than the other, the eldest [is] the most helpless of all'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 299). This criticism is not entirely accurate. Reginald does work. He is his father's curate, or pastoral delegate, who circulates daily among the lower ranks of the flock dispensing what comfort and aid is available to them under the Church's auspices. Even for this arduous and menial round of duties, however, Reginald is expected to be grateful to his father because "'[May] gave [him] title to orders'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 300). No manifest wage is offered for this work ("'You know I can't pay a curate'"), and May's suggestion, that it is inadequate compensation for the expenditures May makes for his son's keep, places the young man in the same other-defined relationship as the one that determines Ursula's devalued (and feminine) place in the household:

> 'And what do you call your nominal curateship,' said his father, 'is not that a sinecure . . . ?'
>
> 'If it is,' said Reginald, . . . 'it is of a contrary kind. It is a sine pay. My work may be bad, though I hope not, but my pay is nothing . . .'
>
> 'Your pay nothing!' cried the father, enraged, 'what do you call your living, your food that you are so fastidious about, your floods of beer and all the rest of it.'
>
> (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 301)

Reginald rebels, as Ursula did, against the father's arbitrary evaluation of his position in the family when May's perception of him and his own of himself become irreconcilably conflictual:

> Reginald continued to walk up and down the room, stung beyond bearing--not that he had not heard it all before, but to get accustomed to such taunts is difficult, and it is still more difficult for a young and susceptible mind to contradict all that is seemly and becoming in nature and to put forth its own statement in return.
> (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 303)

In the interval between Reginald's last hearing of this evaluation of himself and the present one, his "susceptible mind" has been exposed to a modern discourse of honour, morality, and manliness through his studies. In his reading of what his father terms "'the foolish books boys read nowadays,'" Reginald has been trained to hold "'a hundred scruples'" against the previous generations' patronage culture and willingness to derive personal worth from purely social criterion such as position (PJ vol. 1, ch. 10, 196-96). Although Reginald knows that his relationship to his father defines him as dependent and, therefore, as suggestively unmanly, he feels that the opportunity to do real work (and the absence of real wages) redeems his position from the corrupt taint of parasitic profiteering. It is this moral distinction that is at the heart of the argument between the two men.

Reginald has been offered a "'chaplaincy'" at a euphemistically named institution for aging clerics ("'the old College'") that would pay him "'two hundred and fifty [pounds] a year . . . not to speak of the house which [he] could let for fifty more'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 299). The grounds upon which Reginald objects to this post are reflective of the moral middle-class ideology that he has absorbed through "'the Oxford stamp upon [him]'" (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 303). To him, receiving a good wage and a respectable position cannot compensate "'[f]or doing nothing, . . . [for being] thrust into a place where I am not wanted [i.e. needed]--where I can be of no use. A dummy, a practical falsehood. How can I accept it . . . ? I tell you, it is a sinecure!'" (PJ vol.1, ch. 9, 185). Clearly, Reginald has internalized the tenet of professionalism that holds that an honest wage for "'honest work'" is all that is needed to constitute an authentically moral male identity (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 301), but Ursula points out that, without the titular absolute that specifies social status, he will remain as dependent as she is, as determined by the nature of the work as she is, and, by extension, as feminized:

> 'Oh, Janey, hush! we [girls] can't help ourselves, we are obliged to put up with it,' said Ursula, 'but Reginald, he is not obliged, he can save himself when he likes. . . . You will be independent, [Reginald,] able to do what you please, and never ask papa for anything. . . . [W]e must stay and put up with it all, and never, never escape. . . . and here is a nice old-fashioned house all ready for you to step into, and an income. . . . And plenty of work to do . . . in the parish, you may be sure, if you will only help the Rector; or here where you are working already, and where you may be sure nobody will think of paying you. . . . And then you would

> be a really educated man, always ready to do anything that was wanted in Carlingford . . .
>
> Here once more Ursula began to cry. As for Janey, . . . 'Say yes, say yes,' she cried, 'Oh, Reginald, if it was only to spite papa!'
> (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 308-14)

Eventually, the appeal of escaping his father's determining influence and the force of Ursula's arguments persuade Reginald and he accepts the chaplaincy from "'the Corporation'" that administers the old College (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 308). It is a bid for an authentic expression of his educated manhood that combines independence "with an income, without which [the first] is a mockery;" it guarantees him complete freedom of movement, economic autonomy, "a house of his own," and, most importantly for Reginald, the opportunity "to create for himself an ideal position [out of a doubtfully moral public appointment], to become a doer of all kinds of volunteer work" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 4, 61-63). He seems to have comprehended that, while

> on the one hand, professional work . . . [is] celebrated as the means by which an individual (man) achieve[s] self-fulfillment and social status and the avenue by which society recognize[s] and reward[s] merit[,] . . . on the other hand, . . . that work [can] be degrading instead of ennobling, an imposition on rather than an expression of one's self. (Poovey 156)

He is endeavouring , here, to determine himself according to both the social criterion of a professional identity and the moral criterion of self-sacrifice for others. In Oliphant's writing, he cannot have it both ways. He cannot "redefine the notion of work, with its demeaning connotations of subordination" and maintain a "quintessentially masculine" individuality (Davidoff, "'Adam Spoke First'" 244). By engaging the category of social criteria, his masculine identity is the autonomous object of his position's existence (and he becomes the absolute embodiment of an acceptably worthwhile title), while the moral category persists in constructing him as the serving subject of his recipients' needs (or the feminized worker whose value is relative to the moral object of the labour). Reginald acknowledges the servitude of this latter category and its inappropriate applicability to 'true' manhood when he reveals to Ursula the managerial reality of his new status:

> Reginald at home, nominal curate, without pay or position, was a different thing from Reginald with an appointment, a house of his own, and two hundred and fifty pounds a year. The girls looked at him admiringly, but felt that this was never likely to be their fate. . . . Reginald had a great deal to tell them about the college, about the old men who made a hundred daily claims on his attention, and the charities which he had to administer, doles of this and that, and several charity schools of a humble class.
>
> 'As for my time, it is not likely to hang on my hands as I thought. I can't be a parish Quixote, as we planned, Ursula, knocking down windmills for other people,' he said, adjusting his round edge of collar. He was changed; he was important, a personage in his own sight, no longer to be spoken of as Mr. May's son. . . . Ursula did not like the change. (PJ vol. 2, ch. 6, 112-13)

Once ensconced in the "'old-fashioned'" institution (PJ vol. 1, ch. 15, 310), Reginald clearly feels the pull of traditional male identity; he finds himself the proud and willing "heir of . . . centuries" of "'lovely . . . old-fashioned [doctrines]'" of manhood as well as of theology (PJ vol. 2, ch. 11, 231-33). He distances himself from the ambiguity of gender implicit in the service of others (Thompson 71-73) by associating that type of effort with the chivalric Quixote, an effeminate and pathetic figure of ridicule and madness, without surrendering any of the morality inherent in dispensing 'good' to the needy. The difference is, of course, that he determines the dispensation and cannot be determined by it. He is a producer and not a production of service. It is a commitment to a particular form of male identity (one through which the sinecure becomes a calling to manhood "after a divine fashion, in a way which common men had no idea of" [PJ vol. 2, ch. 12, 238]) that cannot be disrupted even by the force of Reginald's desire for a woman who proves to be an inappropriate object for his emerging hegemonic impulse.

Practically speaking, Reginald's chaplaincy and his duties allow him to construct himself according to very traditional social guidelines for the achievement of status and worth. His theoretical position on these issues of identity, however, reflect the Enlightenment philosophy implicit in Phoebe's Dissenting heritage. That is, the assessment of individual worth, to be truly meaningful, must rest upon the discernment of personal merit. That quality, to be a reliable criterion, must not be presumed to be inherent in the merely social categories of class and wealth, but must be specified by the profoundly individual display of intellect (which, by elimination, suggests a commensurate subordination of disruptive emotions), industry (which indicates the presence of self-discipline and -denial), and integrity (which incorporates notions of honour, loyalty, and incorruptibility). In keeping with his philosophical adherence, Reginald is drawn to Phoebe because of what she represents with respect to his own concept of himself and the type of man his education has prepared him to realize:

> The mere apparition of Phoebe upon the horizon had been enough to show Reginald that there were other kinds of human beings in the world. It had not occurred to him that he was in love with her, and the idea of the social suicide implied in marrying old Tozer's granddaughter, had not so much as once entered his imagination. . . . He was an Oxford man, with the best of education, but he was a simpleton all the same. He thought he saw in her [like a revelation out of a different world] an evidence of what life was like in those intellectual professional circles, which a man may hope to get into only in London. It was not the world of fashion, he was aware, but he thought in his simplicity that it was the still higher world of culture and knowledge, where genius, and wit, and intellect stood instead of rank or riches. (PJ vol. 2, ch. 14, 277)

In spite of his philosophical idealism, Reginald has begun to comprehend that a union between a scion of the entrenched gentry (which he is "by prescriptive right" as a chaplain and the son of a pastor [PJ vol. 3, ch. 2, 34]) and a child of the new and enlightened meritocracy "'would never do'" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 307). It is significant that

Phoebe has no reservations about such an unorthodox coupling (she is authentically of the new ideology) while Reginald "oppos[es] her pointedly, as he had never opposed her before" (PJ vol. 2, ch. 15, 308). For all his theoretical commitment to the inherent personal value of his labour, he is not prepared to forgo the social value of his titular status, nor is he able to and still convey a stable morality to the watching hegemony. Copperhead points out that an alliance between the antithetical epistemologies and value systems would constitute a breach of the public's faith:

> 'By George! . . . you are [required to stay at exactly the same opinion about whether the individual or his position determines worthwhile identity] though, when you're a public man. . . . I can tell you that changing your opinion is just the very last thing the public will permit you to do.' (PJ vol. 3, ch. 5, 92)

Although Reginald is almost certainly in love with Phoebe (or at least with what she represents), he does not offer to make his identification with her ideology official; he does not propose. Phoebe knows that, at heart, Reginald is not the type of man to require her determining strength:

> He was very tender in his reverential homage, very romantic, a true lover, not the kind of man who wants a wife or wants a clever companion to amuse him, and save him the expense of a coach, and be his to refer to in everything. That was an altogether different sort of thing.
> (PJ vol. 3, ch. 7, 137)

The note of chivalry in this description of Reginald's love further associates him with traditional manhood. He is not looking for a woman with whom he can form a loving and mutual dependency, but for an object in the worship of whom he may express his ability to desire, or to be masculine. He is not determined by this relationship, but determines himself with respect to his chosen object and in the process creates the value and identity of the one he objectifies. Instead of undermining his autonomous selfhood, as it did for Cavendish, Reginald's desire consolidates it, re-creating in him a determining capacity that is very like his father's. He has incarnated himself as "the self-made, self-sufficient man . . . by virtue of the fact that he [is] like--not different from--the other men with whom he [must and is] free to compete. . . . [T]his likeness becomes the ground of [his] unique identity" (Poovey 108). In fact, by the end of the novel, Reginald appears to have absorbed all the masculine authority formerly held by his father and to have become a more benevolent version of that powerful figure:

> [May] got better and worse for about a year, and then he died, his strength failing him without any distinct reason, no one could tell how. Reginald got the living and stepped into his place, making a home for the children . . . As the times are so unsettled, and no one can tell what may become within a year of any old foundation, the trustees have requested Reginald to retain his chaplaincy at the old College; so that he is in reality a pluralist, and almost rich, though they say the hardest-worked man in Carlingford. He has his vagaries too, which no man can live without, but he is the kindest guardian to his brothers and sisters . . . [a]nd he has a curate . . .
> (PJ vol. 3, ch. 16, 329)

While the description of Reginald's 'happy ending' indicates that he is fully assimilated into the moral order of a traditional social structure, it also hints at an ambivalence, a pluralistic divergence in the foundation upon which Reginald's identity is constructed. He is at once a powerful authority (both socially and morally, in that he acquires surplus wealth from administrating an ecclesiastic institution) and a humble social servant (which lends his identity a second source of moral rectitude). The serving role, however, does little more than offer (moral) support to his hegemonic identity. Reginald now ably embodies the fully-realized Victorian male and is fixed in a social place that allows the beneficial expression of that moral arrival. He no longer passes freely across the boundaries between his own and other levels of existence, but he has Janey serving him within the domestic sphere and his curate within the social, so he no longer has need to seek a worthwhile meaning for himself in relation to those realms. It (and he) are contained by and within the titular absolute of his self-sufficient position.

# Chapter Six
# Conclusion

In the thirteen years that spanned Oliphant's writing of SC (1863), MM (1866), and PJ (1876), the Victorian debate about 'the woman question' raged on. These novels represent just a small part of Oliphant's literary intervention in that cultural attempt to determine the significance of women's changing definitions and roles in society. Because Oliphant's interventions partake of many traditional, essentialist notions about sexual identity and its 'natural' expression, it may be argued (and often is) that she was not an important contributor to the history of the women's movement (Williams 106). These novels reveal, however, that her intent was not to redefine 'woman' but to redefine the spaces within which she could claim a culturally-authorized presence. One of those spaces was the workplace and Oliphant laboured over and through The Chronicles to show that, if contemporary concepts of 'authentic' womanhood--as maternal, selfless, self-sacrificing, and subordinate--were true reflections of her domestic nature, then the workplace, with its implicit super/subordinate relations, was an alternate site in which this 'authentic femininity' could be appropriately expressed.

Oliphant begins her demonstration of the connection between 'authentic womanhood' and work with her characterization of Mrs. Vincent in SC. Although she, as a character, plays only a very small part in the actual movement of the plot, Mrs. Vincent's middle-class moral femininity provides the terms and the limits within which her children, Susan and Arthur, will determine themselves. More (or less) than a full participant in the events that bring her offspring to culturally meaningful identities, she is an exemplification of the social and moral authority embodied by those whose labour is an expression of the 'true' self. For women, the 'truth of self' articulated by work is middle-class maternity and it stipulates the presence of some needy other for whom effort must be expended at all costs, but according to very particular guidelines. Again Mrs. Vincent precisely exemplifies, with her every labour, these idealized standards. She is selfless, subordinate to male authority, wholly committed to the comfort and well-being of those she serves, and exact about the cleanliness and organization of the domestic environment her children inhabit. These attributes both identify her 'naturally' moral femininity and specify her 'natural' superiority to those women who execute such labours only for pay (as her son's landlady does).

Oliphant explores the difference between the moral value ascribed to the two types of domestic labour--'natural' and paid--through the characters of Susan Vincent and Rachel (Mildmay) Hilyard, respectively. Susan, at the beginning of SC, is an invisible, morally-imperiled young woman who finds redemption and develops moral substance only when she voluntarily takes over the care of a needy child in response to an awakened maternal instinct. Although Mrs. Vincent has served ably as a model for the expression of this feminine 'instinct,' Susan herself must display free agency in her determination to embody it through her work for Alice in order that her 'occupation' as middle-class mother be seen as a personal and social identity that is as 'authentic' to her as it is to Mrs. Vincent. Like Susan, Hilyard has chosen an occupation that allows her to articulate an acceptable version of motherhood. She too freely chooses to respond to the urgings of maternal instinct with a selfless labour that promotes the well-being of her child. For her, however, the 'self' she sacrifices in order to realize her domestic 'nature' is the purely social one specified by class. That is, Hilyard abandons the idle, upper-class identity she once possessed so that she may do needlework to provide subsistence and care for her daughter, who the terrified mother sees as being in danger of corruption from her father's influence. Oliphant posits Hilyard's self-determined descent in the social hierarchy both as a rise in moral status and as the establishment of a 'true maternity' whose paid labour is morally indistinguishable from Mrs. Vincent's idealized labour because its sole object--the care of a child--is identical. However, as soon as Hilyard's working identity becomes 'self'-oriented--as it does when she retreats to her slops in order to escape prosecution--then it is no longer an expression of her 'authentic' moral femininity, but of an assumed one that is taken on to subvert social processes of justice.

Oliphant's examination of the intersection of the private and the public, of the 'authentically' moral and the 'merely' social, continues in MM, where Lucilla Marjoribanks uses the middle-class domestic skills that define her in order to re-organize local society into a network of professionals within which 'true' affiliation determines the distribution of social and political power. Because Lucilla is the selfless creator of this identifying connection, she becomes the standard by which 'authenticity' of membership may be measured. Barbara Lake disqualifies herself from beneficial participation in this 'networking' project when, instead of creating and anchoring affiliative bonds, she disrupts them with her introduction of self-serving competition for material security. Work, for Barbara, is not a means of selflessly stabilizing the domestic realm through unity and cooperation, but only an economic instrument of 'self'-promotion that leads to both division and lost opportunities for working expressions of the 'authentic' self. Rose Lake is one of Barbara's victims. Because Barbara takes a job solely for the economic and personal independence it offers, Rose must give up the vocation through which she both realized a 'true,' transcendent feminine identity and disseminated this moral 'truth' to those in need (i.e. to those not 'naturally' of the middle class as she is). Although the domestic labour to which she returns (by necessity) continues to allow Rose a moral expression of her 'natural self,' it does not permit an 'authentic' one in the way that such labour does for Lucilla. That is, while Rose loses her free mobility between the realms of public work and private life when she performs her homely chores, Lucilla gains precisely that transcendence because the operations of the professionalized domestic realm do require Lucilla's skilled expressions of her 'natural' femininity in order to reproduce at a national level the middle-class order she has instituted at a municipal one. Lucilla's training for this nationalized domestic career is vital. Without it, she could not participate meaningfully in the public discourse of cultural production.

Oliphant pursues the idea that women must be trained to best express their 'authentic' morality in PJ where Ursula May must discover that she may serve her family with the greatest beneficial effect (both morally and economically) by learning the domestic skills of the middle-class mother. Such work allows her both to articulate her 'natural self' and to participate in the family's economic production of its social status. The clear link between middle-class domestic productivity (as a vocation) and material gain (as the implicit wage of maternity) is reiterated and made contingent on a woman's expression of an 'authentically' middle-class identity within Oliphant's characterization of Phoebe Beecham. Whereas Ursula lacked the necessary skills, Phoebe possesses them in abundance. At first, however, she uses them only to assert herself as a social affiliate of the middle class. The skills identify her as a moral affiliate only when they no longer promote her rationally-determined social aspirations, but serve her instinctual defense of a threatened middle-class identity. Only then can her proven 'authenticity' transcend the 'merely' social definitions of an individual's existence (specified by such institutions as the legal system) in order to assert the superior rationale determined by the female domestic labourer in the service of her dependents. Phoebe's realization of this 'authentically' productive self is structurally associated in the novel with her pending acquisition of both 'a profession' and economic surplus in the form of a marriage to the wealthy Clarence Copperhead. Although Ursula too realizes a material gain through the skilled execution of her 'natural' work for others, her ascension is re-inscribed in the sentimental narrative of romanticized domesticity. Phoebe, however, makes use of her maternal talents to produce a worthwhile social identity (the Member of Parliament that Clarence will become) as well as to reproduce her rational domesticity within the public realm of political discourse.

For the men of The Chronicles to achieve an equivalent degree of moral identity, they too must work. The investigation of Oliphant's representations of Arthur Vincent (SC), Cavendish (MM), and Reginald May (PJ) reveals, however, that the object of this work determines whether or not each character will achieve 'authentic' manhood as well as 'true' morality. For his part, Arthur discovers, when he takes up his salaried post as pastor of the Carlingford Dissenting congregation, that although his paid work in the congregation's service constructs him as a moral speaker of the'truth' whose presumed selflessness permits him free access to all the spheres and classes of Carlingford society, such labour also feminizes him because he is not only subordinate to and dependent upon those who pay him, but he is also restricted to the reproduction of the congregation's values and norms rather than being free to disseminate the educated ethics that Arthur feels identify his most 'authentic' self. A cross-class desire for Lady Western awakens his interest in realizing his more masculine identity. This 'natural' potency empowers him to overwhelm, with the sheer force of his emerging manhood, the public determinations of him as feminine and, therefore, as a man who can be denied what he desires with impunity. As an 'authenticated' man, Arthur will reproduce, through his work, only the values that constitute his self-determined, masculine identity.

Self-determination is never possible for Cavendish in MM. From the outset of the novel he is dependent on the identities of others for the place he occupies in Carlingford society. At first, his personal significance is determined by the genteel manners that identify him as a social affiliate of Lucilla's professional network. Then, his 'true' self emerges in the form of his desire for the working-class Barbara. Such a 'natural' attraction for a 'self-full' woman differentiates and exiles him from the company he aspires to. Although he returns to Carlingford and attempts to determine himself according to the work of cultural reproduction (wherein he would represent, he thinks, the interests and values of the middle class at a national level), 'nature' and Barbara's determining autonomy intervene once more. He cannot be "the man for Carlingford" because he is not 'truly' a man according to its middle-class standards. That is, he does not subordinate his 'nature' to serve the interests of a self-determined and 'authentic' public identity, but is subordinated (feminized) by it to follow the determinations of one who is 'by nature' the domestic other.

Such other-dependent determinations about 'self' are also present in the characterization of Reginald May in PJ. In the case of this young man, it is an overbearing father who feminizes him by alienating him from the expression of an 'authentic' manhood. That is, May not only owns the labour Reginald performs, but he also obstructs his son from using the working opportunity to express an autonomy of mind and being necessary to his masculinity. Reginald counters this demasculinization by accepting an appointment through which he may continue his labour but own it himself and achieve economic independence. When desire emerges in his life, it is transformed into male competition. Although Reginald proves himself to be quite 'naturally' the better man in this rivalry (both morally and intellectually), Reginald knows that the competition's feminine prize is an inappropriate acquisition for the 'authentic' self he is asserting. A woman with Phoebe's determining strength would undermine his ability to express his now-established masculine integrity. He may continue to articulate this virtuous and manly identity through his labour, but only if his sole object is the public reproduction of his valued self.

Oliphant's use, in The Chronicles, of the hegemonic binaries around which Victorian culture organized its concepts of masculine/feminine, public/private, and social/natural effects a subtle redefinition of woman's 'place' in society. She does not dispute the contemporarily-valued vision of middle-class woman as 'naturally' maternal, but simply shows how the very attributes that give moral authority to woman's expression of her maternal instinct--selflessness, industriousness, and self-willed subordination to the identity-needs of others--also authorize her to inhabit a public work space as 'naturally' as she does the domestic one. The super/subordinate relations that define each site as a place of meaningful labour are identical and construct every worker who occupies the subordinate position as necessarily 'authentically' feminine. One might argue that such a rhetorical gambit restricts women to menial, or inferior, occupations in the workplace and only re-inscribes their oppression as 'natural.' As far as that statement goes, I must agree, but it is very important to understand that simply giving moral authority to women's presence in the Victorian workplace--to say nothing of appropriating that site and its 'public' concerns as 'rightfully' belonging to women--was a radically feminist gesture (although Oliphant herself would almost certainly have denied possessing such an extreme intent). From the effect of this gesture, we can see that Oliphant's answer to one of her culture's most pressing questions--"What do we do with our women?"--was quite simple: "We let them express who they really are (and always have been) through the reproduction of themselves in their natural labour."

## Works Cited

Arnold, Matthew. "Sweetness and Light." Culture and Anarchy. Ed. J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Athenaeum: Journal of English and Foreign Literature, Science, and Fine Arts 24 Nov. 1849: 1178.

Barrett, Michele. Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis. London: Verso, 1985.

Blake, Andrew. Reading Victorian Fiction: The Cultural Context and Ideological Content of the Nineteenth-Century Novel. London: Macmillan, 1989.

Burman, Sandra, ed., Fit Work for Women. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

Colby, Vineta and Robert A. Colby. The Equivocal Virtue: Mrs. Oliphant and the Victorian Literary Market Place. N.p.: Archon Books, 1966.

Corr, Helen and Lynn Jamieson, eds. Politics of Everyday Life: Continuity and Change in Work and the Family. London: Macmillan, 1990.

Davidoff, Leonore. "'Adam Spoke First and Named the Orders of the World': Masculine and Feminine Domains in History and Sociology." Corr and Jamieson, Politics of Everyday Life 229-55.

---. The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973.

Dyhouse, Carol. Feminism and the Family in England, 1880-1939. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Ferris, Ina. "From Trope to Code: The Novel and the Rhetoric of Gender in Nineteenth-Century Critical Discourse." Shires, Rewriting the Victorians 18-30.

Gallagher, Catherine. The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985.

Hall, Catherine. "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology." Burman, Fit Work 15-32.

Helsinger, Elizabeth K., Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder. The Woman Question: Literary Issues, 1837-1883. New York: Garland Publishing, 1983. Vol. 3 of The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883. 3 vols.

Mackintosh, Maureen. "Domestic Labour and the Household." Burman, Fit Work 173-91.

Mark-Lawson, Jane and Anne Witz. "Familial Control or Patriarchal Domination?" Corr and Jamieson, Politics of Everyday Life 117-40.

Moi, Toril. Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory. London: Methuen, 1985.

Newton, Judith. "Engendering History for the Middle Class: Sex and Political Economy in the Edinburgh Review." Shires, Rewriting the Victorians 1-17.

Oliphant, Margaret Oliphant Wilson. Autobiography and

Letters of Mrs. Margaret Oliphant. Ed. Mrs. Harry Coghill. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1899. N.p.: Leicester UP, 1974.

---. Miss Marjoribanks. Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1866. London: Virago Press, 1988.

---. Phoebe Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1876. New York: Garland Publishing, 1976.

---. Salem Chapel. Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1863. London: Virago Press, 1986.

Peterson, M. Jeanne. Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.

Poovey, Mary. Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.

Rendall, Jane. "'A Moral Engine'? Feminism, Liberalism and the English Woman's Journal." Rendall, Equal or Different 112-38.

---, ed. Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

---. Introduction. Rendall, Equal or Different 1-27.

Sanderson, Kay. "Meanings of Class and Social Mobility." Corr and Jamieson, Politics of Everyday Life 206-225.

Scott, Joan Wallach. Gender and the Politics of History. New York: Columbia UP, 1988.

Shires, Linda M. Afterword. Shires, Rewriting the

Victorians 184-90.

---, ed. Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Shuttleworth, Sally. "Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of Bourgeois Motherhood in the Mid-Victorian Era." Shires, Rewriting the Victorians 31-51.

Sturrock, June. "Something to Do: Charlotte Yonge, Tractarianism and the Question of Women's Work." Victorian Review 18.2 (1992): 28-48.

Thompson, Dorothy. "Women, Work and Politics in Nineteenth-Century England: The Problem of Authority." Rendall, Equal or Different 57-81.

Walby, Sylvia. "Women's Employment and the Historical Periodisation of Patriarchy." Corr and Jamieson, Politics of Everyday Life 141-61.

Wheeler, Michael. English Fction of the Victorian Period: 1830-1890. London: Longman, 1985.

Williams, Merryn. Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.